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Yoga Intervention: A Yoga-Based Curriculum To Develop Mindfulness, Emotion Regulation, And Resilience In Adolescents

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YOGA INTERVENTION: A YOGA-BASED CURRICULUM TO DEVELOP
MINDFULNESS, EMOTION REGULATION, AND RESILIENCE IN
ADOLESCENTS

by

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A capstone in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Teaching

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

Investigating the potential benefits of contemplative practices such as mindfulness, yoga, and meditation to enhance social and emotional learning (SEL) is at the center of education reform today. High school students of the 21st century need an education system that supports their social, emotional, and ethical development as well as their academic learning (Noddings, 2005). Currently, there is a collective educational interest in bringing mindfulness to the public school arena as a way to meet SEL standards. I would like to take this collective interest a step further and propose a curriculum based on *yoga*, particularly for high school students of diverse backgrounds. While there are striking similarities between current SEL programs and yoga, I believe that yoga encompasses a crucial physical component of well being that is often overlooked by current SEL programs. My research question is, “*How can high schools use yoga to foster social and emotional learning in students of all backgrounds?*”

In order to answer my research question, I am proposing a yoga-based curriculum called the *Global Movement Initiative*. The purpose of my curriculum is to foster social and emotional learning (SEL) as well as improve physical fitness in Minnesota high school students of all backgrounds. Because Minnesota does not currently have SEL standards in place, I have designed SEL standards for Minnesota based on standards that

currently exist in Illinois and Alaska. My curriculum is intended to support the standards I propose.

My interest in this topic is grounded in my own personal experience with, and without, yoga. I began practicing about six years ago. Last year, I completed a 200-hour teacher-training program and became a yoga teacher. My own personal practice has helped me survive some of the most difficult situations in my life, and it is my wish to enable adolescent students to develop the self-regulatory skills they need to be successful in an increasingly competitive and stressful educational environment as well as in their personal lives. My interest also stems from my experience as a high school teacher, first as a Teach for America corps member teaching in the heart of Minneapolis, then as an 8th grade teacher at an American international school in the capital city of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and finally back to the Minneapolis area where I am currently teaching high school biology. Throughout my teaching career, I have worked with many diverse groups of students from all around the world, each bringing something different to my classroom. I believe that the refinement of social and emotional awareness and management has the potential to enhance academic learning as well as the overall well being of all students. Yoga, with its emphasis on truth, understanding, acceptance, and unity, is the ideal program for teaching social and emotional skills. Yoga has been scientifically proven to improve self-regulatory skills such as attention, emotion regulation, and impulse inhibition while reducing depression, stress, anxiety levels, and posttraumatic disorder and improving mood, quality of life, and well-being (Ferreira-Vorkapic, et al., 2015). In today's increasingly globalized society, there is nothing more important.

Defining Key Terms

The Collective for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2015) has defined *social and emotional learning* as the process through which children develop awareness and management of their emotions, set and achieve important personal and academic goals, use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships, and demonstrate decision making and responsible behaviors to achieve school and life success.

Self-regulatory skills are defined as the ability to independently monitor and adjust behavior, attention, emotion, the physical body, cognitive processes, and motivation.

Mindfulness is most commonly defined as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, 4).

Attention is defined as the ability to concentrate on and finish a given task as well as the ability to shift attention from one subject to another (Duncan et al., 2007).

Finally, for the context of this paper, *yoga* is defined as a practice that unites the body and mind and increases awareness and the ability to focus completely on one thing without getting distracted (Desikachar, 1997).

Motivation and Desired Outcomes

Upon studying current SEL models, I began to question a few things. I saw a huge overlap between SEL and *mindfulness*. SEL and mindfulness are very similar, which is not surprising because both of them have roots in Eastern philosophy – yoga, in particular. It seemed strange to me that schools had essentially dismissed the traditional origins of SEL and mindfulness simply to rebrand them and market them as something

new, minus the *physical* aspect. Don't get me wrong – the mental components of SEL and mindfulness are extremely important, and I do include them in my curriculum. But by removing the physical aspect of a yoga practice, we are doing our students a crippling disservice. We are taking away an opportunity for them to learn to become aware of what their bodies are trying to tell them. Learning how to control the movement of the body and coordinate it with the breath provides invaluable lessons on self-regulation and enhances all other types of learning. Body and mind are not separate entities. For example, when we are startled, our heart rate skyrockets, and when we are relaxed, our heart rate slows. The body is directly affected by the mind, and the mind is directly affected by the body. Even our sense of self is anchored in a vital connection with our bodies (Van der Kolk, 2015). Collectively, we must reunite the physical and mental components of yoga before we can most effectively enhance students' social and emotional learning.

A major concern with yoga is that it is physically unsafe. I aim to dismantle this argument. There is no sound reason for dismissing the physical exercises that accompany yoga. The physical practice of yoga is accessible to everybody that can move and breathe. There are modifications that can be made to accommodate every single person regardless of mental illness, physical, developmental, or cognitive disabilities, and even exposure to trauma. In fact, yoga is a form of treatment for all kinds of mental and physical disorders. What I'm getting at here is that the physical and mental aspects are *meant to be practiced together* in order to experience maximum benefit.

It is my wish to equip adolescents with the self-regulatory skills they need in order to be successful academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. I want to help

students learn how to stay calm and present even amidst emotionally intense situations so that they can make healthy and effective decisions instead of being immediately hijacked by their feelings. Many of the yoga programs I've encountered in my research are designed for adolescents that already have police records, heavy psychological diagnoses, and/or other permanent consequences. Yoga is a holistic, integrative method for maintaining optimum emotional and physical health, and the fact that we wait until adolescents are already in trouble to offer a yoga program is reflective of our health system at large. In the West, we tend to treat the problem after it has already manifested and fail to recognize and eliminate the original cause of our suffering. I believe it is possible to develop a yoga program that can promote holistic health in adolescents and reduce the number of problems that arise.

Personal History

I was an optimistic, free-spirited and motivated senior in college when I decided to join Teach for America. I was on the path to medical school, but I did not feel ready to take that step immediately after graduation. The two-year commitment of Teach for America (TFA) was quite appealing. I reasoned that if I still wanted to go to medical school after those two years, I could. I had even heard that medical schools *encouraged* recent college grads to take some time off. I envisioned myself teaching well-behaved, eager to learn elementary school students how to tell time or count money somewhere in California. I had no idea that I was about to start one of the hardest things I've ever done.

I completed my Bachelor of Arts degree at Gustavus Adolphus College. I double majored in Biology and Psychology and minored in Neuroscience. My advisor once asked me jokingly if I was "collecting these majors or what?!" Undeterred, I knew that I

loved the brain, and ultimately all I wanted to do was find a job that somehow allowed me to contribute to the advancement of the collective human experience. I knew that TFA would give me an opportunity to do meaningful work helping people that really needed it. Whether I stayed in the field of education after my two years of teaching or left for medical school didn't matter to me at the time.

My goal was to do what every other teacher initially wants to do: provide kids with a better education so that they can eventually grow up and make the world a better place. Not only did I want to educate kids, I wanted to educate the kids that faced the most serious consequences if they did not succeed in school. I wanted to help the students that needed me the most. I wanted to close the achievement gap. I wanted to inspire change – change in the kids I worked with and also in the education system as a whole. I wanted equality. I wanted to provide all kids with an equal opportunity to go to college and be successful. That was my dream. And I have to say, I did it – for a while, anyway.

For two years I worked at a charter school in south Minneapolis. I taught 9th grade Physical Science and 10th grade Biology. As part of the TFA program, all corps members are required to take night classes at an affiliated university in order to earn their teaching license. I typically had classes two nights a week from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., after teaching for an extended school day. Additionally, TFA planned their professional development workshops on Saturdays. So there I was, teaching for 9 hours a day, attending night school, going to workshops on the weekends, lesson planning, grading, and relentlessly fueling my Diet Coke addiction.

As many TFA corps members eventually do, I left. I did not think I could physically survive another year teaching the way I was. I was exhausted. I was

inefficient. I was undertrained. I was sick of failing. Teaching is not a natural skill, I realized. It is a learned skill. And it takes time. I felt that the students I was working with deserved a teacher that knew what he or she was doing. They deserved the best. A highly trained, experienced teacher that could do more than I could. I did not feel that I was making the impact I had originally dreamed of making.

I thought about my options, and I decided to go abroad. I decided to do this for a number of reasons, but I mostly had a longing to learn more about my family. The diversity of my students inspired me to reconnect with my own culture. I am half Arab. My dad emigrated from Damascus, Syria when he was barely 19 in hope of attending college to be an engineer. Instead, he met my mom. She stole his heart, taught him how to speak English, and helped him adjust to life in the United States. My dad has 11 siblings, and he is the only one in the US. I thought that if I got a job in the Middle East I could learn to speak Arabic. I dreamed of finally being able to communicate with my family back in Syria using more than broken English. This was my motivation during the long and complicated process of looking for a job abroad.

I did not realize that once I arrived at the international hiring fair in Boston, I would be the youngest person there. At 23, I barely met the minimum requirements for job placement. I was still finishing courses for my teaching license, and I was still in my second year of teaching – completion of both is required in order to teach internationally. Every single school in Dubai, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey turned me down. Some schools didn't even offer me an interview. Luckily, the headmaster at the Carol Morgan School in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic knew what Teach for America was and thought I was tough for being in the program. He hired me and I agreed

to move to a little island in the Caribbean to teach middle school science for two years. I didn't even know where the Dominican Republic was. I had to find it on a map. Not surprisingly, I didn't speak a word of Spanish either. Nevertheless, five months later I had my own apartment in the heart of the capital city of Santo Domingo and was completely, whole-heartedly engulfed in the Dominican culture. Spanish was more a part of my day than English. I ate fried plantains for lunch, bought fresh mangos from the fruit truck across the street, danced salsa on the beach in the middle of the night, and got engaged to a local Dominican teacher at my school. There was a deep divide between American and Dominican teachers, and I had one foot planted firmly on each side. This gave me a unique understanding of both cultures. I learned what it meant to be an outsider trying desperately to fit in. As long as I live, I will never forget a second of those two years. I deeply respect anyone that goes through the identity-shifting, life-changing process of moving to a foreign country.

I share this story because it opened my eyes and my heart to the experience that my dad and so many of my students have gone through or are currently going through. I felt the intense vulnerability of speaking a language you don't really know and understood the heartbreak of knowing that you do not possess the ability to accurately express yourself. I became acutely aware of the stares, the rude comments, and the laughter that followed me, especially after I said words like *caliente* or *Don Quixote*. I felt excluded from group conversations because I couldn't understand or communicate fast enough and constantly felt fearful that I was doing something culturally unacceptable.

My point is this that if we could teach our students how to imagine what that vulnerability, heartbreak, humiliation, exclusion, and fear might feel like, we could avoid so much unnecessary pain and misunderstanding. If we could teach students the social and emotional skills required to see beyond themselves and appreciate the concerns of others, we could make every student feel safe, valued, and important. Students' academic achievement would increase, problematic behaviors would decrease, and the quality of the relationships surrounding each student would improve.

In the past five years, I've watched Syria fall into irreversible despair. I've overheard countless uneducated judgments, accusations, and insults. I've watched thousands of refugees flee the terror of their homeland, only to be shunned by their intended place of safety. I cannot think of a single thing that is more important than teaching our students how to be knowledgeable, capable, caring, and responsible citizens of our increasingly globalized society.

A Moment of Insight

In my first few months living abroad, I had fallen into the habit of staying inside for far too long because I was afraid of going out alone and getting lost or having to rely on my extremely limited Spanish skills. One night not too long after I had arrived, I realized that I felt restless. I knew that I needed to move, but what was I supposed to do? It was dark outside and very dangerous for a woman to walk alone at night. I tried to sit down and do my grading, but I couldn't concentrate. Eventually, I sat down on the floor and started stretching, which was something that I hadn't done in ages. I was a competitive gymnast for 10 years, so I was very used to stretching my muscles. I couldn't believe how out of shape I was. I was nowhere near as flexible as I used to be. Sometimes

I think that being suddenly immersed in a brand new country with a new culture, language, home, job, and friends had forced me to become acutely aware of my surroundings, and more importantly *my place in* my surroundings. My self-awareness increased because it *had* to in order for me to survive. I was learning new things all day, every day. I didn't know a word of Spanish before I arrived to the Dominican Republic, and all of the sudden I was expected to speak it 24/7. I was learning a new language, a new city, and a new way of living altogether. I had to pay attention and be present if I wanted to make it. I think this renewed sense of self-awareness contributed to my seemingly "random" need to stretch and move my body.

Once my contract in the DR ended, I returned to my parents' house in Minnesota. Anyone that has lived abroad knows that coming home is the hardest part. It is hard because you are physically back in the same place you were before you left, but nothing about you is the same. Your relationships with friends and family are completely different once you return and it takes time for them to redevelop. The feeling I had upon returning to the United States was so uncomfortable that I left again after 3 months. This time, I left for Southeast Asia. I was so inspired by what had happened to me that I signed up for a yoga teacher training in Indonesia. I wanted to deepen my practice and understand why the movement of yoga was so impactful to me. Yoga teacher trainings are not easy. Most of them cost over \$4,000, and they can take anywhere from one month to one year to complete. I did my training in one month. I was meditating before I opened my eyes in the morning and studying asana and yoga theory until I fell asleep. I began to understand myself. I could start to understand why certain things in my life had

happened, how I had contributed to them, and how I hadn't. I learned to listen to my body as a vital sign of my overall well-being.

Relevant Background of the Researcher

I received my Bachelor of Arts degree from Gustavus Adolphus College with a double major in Biology and Psychology and a minor in Neuroscience. I have my 9-12 Life Sciences teaching license from Hamline University. I am currently in my sixth year of teaching. I have four years of experience teaching at the high school level and two years of international teaching experience at the middle school level. The courses I have taught include Biology, Physical Science, Environmental Science, and Geometry (on a variance). I have participated in a two-day intensive ENVoY (Emotional and Non-Verbal Yardsticks) training that focused on effective classroom management using body language, tone of voice, body posture, and other non-verbal cues.

I completed my 200-hour RYT (Registered Yoga Teacher) training in Canggu, Bali, Indonesia at Santosha Yoga. I studied with Sunny Richards, Peter Clifford, and Hamid Ebadi. I am currently enrolled in a 300-hour Advanced Teacher Training through the Yoga Center of Minneapolis. The modules I am enrolled in are called *Yoga Therapeutics for the Emotional Body* and *Anatomy and Yoga Therapeutics for the Physical Body*. I plan on joining the Yoga Center of Minneapolis in November for their three-year 1,000-hour Yoga Therapy program.

Upon graduating from Santosha Yoga two years ago, I began teaching regular yoga classes at YogaFit in Northeast Minneapolis. I have experience teaching YogaFit Sweat (a challenging heated, vinyasa flow class) and YogaFit Basics (a foundations class for beginners). I also have four years of experience coaching gymnastics and one year of

experience coaching track and field. I believe that coaching has given me additional confidence in leading others in a yoga practice.

In my work over these past few years, I have come to the realization that young people today are over diagnosed with mental disorders and under supported in therapy. There are so many therapies that have been scientifically proven to be beneficial, and I think we need to utilize those resources *before* a diagnosis is given. Unfortunately, I don't see a change in the near future because a diagnosis is often required for health insurance reimbursement. While I might not be able to change that, it is my dream to enable educators to provide their students with healthy coping mechanisms so that they can deal with and heal from their experiences instead of suffering from chronic psychological distress. In this way, we can help students live safer, healthier, and more productive lives. Van der Kolk (2015), founder of the Trauma Center, summarizes with the following quote:

Psychiatry, as a subspecialty of medicine, aspires to define mental illness as precisely as, let's say, cancer of the pancreas, or streptococcal infection of the lungs. However, given the complexity of the mind, brain, and human attachment systems, we have not come even close to achieving that sort of precision.

Understanding what is "wrong" with people currently is more a question of the mind-set of the practitioner (and of what insurance companies will pay for) than of verifiable, objective facts (139).

Other Reflections

Looking back on my time as a corps member, I can clearly see many of my shortcomings. I was trying to do too much. I was distracting my students, and the less

they paid attention, the more rules and procedures I tried to force on them. A sense of urgency is important, but not at the expense of maintaining a calm, safe classroom with a clear purpose and direction. “Relationships [with students] should happen at the level of being laid back, with a sense of softening, relaxation, a little bit of tension and awareness, an attunement, and dare I say it, love” (McKenna, 2015). Human beings, especially children, have a core need for contact, attunement, and love. The quality of teacher awareness matters, and the presence educators have with their students is extremely important in enabling them to develop healthy social and emotional skills.

Summary

I believe that in order to cultivate the type of skills that children of the 21st century need in order to be successful adults, the public education system would benefit from collectively integrating yoga into the school day as a way to meet social and emotional learning standards. Both physical *and* mental faculties need to be utilized *simultaneously*, enabling the whole student to grow and develop the self-regulatory skills they will need to find success in our rapidly changing world.

I have chosen to deviate from the current mindfulness trend because I believe that physical movement, in the form of yoga, is a key missing piece of many current SEL programs. I think that every student has something to gain from my curriculum, and consequently it is designed for universal implementation; however, I also discuss the potential for using the curriculum in an intensive intervention setting in order to provide more individualized support for high-need or high-risk students, such as those with school refusal or aggressive behavior, mental disorders, PTSD, learning disabilities, ADHD, or as a complementary therapeutic program for anyone who wants to use it.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview

In order to answer the question, *“How can high schools use yoga to foster social and emotional learning in students from all backgrounds?”* it is necessary to present a summary of research from three relevant categories. First, I will discuss the foundations of yoga. I will highlight key historical events that are important in understanding the development of yoga theory and connect current scientific research to ancient yoga traditions.

Second, I will discuss the neuroscience of why yoga works. I will start by presenting research that explains human neurobiological development from infancy into adulthood, focusing primarily on adolescent development between the ages of 13-18. I will discuss biological and environmental events that shape an individual’s capacity for social and emotional competency including self-regulation, resilience, and empathy. Early learning mechanisms such as mirroring and attachment patterns will be discussed first, followed by important structural developments in the brain. Throughout this section, connections will be made to highlight the importance of yoga in enhancing brain development as well as yoga’s potential to alleviate the problems faced by adolescents with exposure to trauma and/or other obstacles to normal brain development.

Third, I will discuss the role of schools as vehicles for social change and explain their responsibility in developing important mental dispositions in young people today – particularly their role in social and emotional learning. Current SEL standards will be outlined as well as research that calls for their implementation in all schools. I will also briefly summarize the Minnesota SEL standards that I have created. These will be presented in greater detail in Chapter 4. Current findings on the efficacy of existing yoga and/or mindfulness programs will be explored as well as the enormous potential that still exists for yoga to positively impact adolescents if implemented correctly.

Foundations of Yoga

Philosophy of Yoga

Yoga has many positive effects on the mind and body and has been practiced for millennia by people of all ages around the world. Yoga practices lead to a calmer and more alert mind as well as a healthier and more physically fit body. The reason that yoga has thrived for thousands of years is because of the profound mental and physical health benefits that have been experienced. This gives us a rationale for incorporating these practices into many forms of therapy as well as for maintaining a daily yoga practice in order to promote a healthy lifestyle. Modern scientific research on yoga provides even more evidence of the healing effects that can be achieved.

While yoga does share similarities with Eastern philosophies and religions, yoga is not made up of any philosophies, concepts, ideologies, or belief systems. There are only methods to enhance perception. Yoga does not require a particular belief system, nor does the practice of yoga challenge existing beliefs (Desikachar, 1995). For the purpose of this curriculum, I am simply interested in yoga as a practical inquiry into being. It is an

invitation to explore the human experience for anyone and everyone that is curious about what it means to be alive. It is a system of investigations into the subjective experience of human consciousness, perception, and awareness. The value of yoga is to cultivate an inner state of centered awareness that cannot be disturbed by the inevitable turmoil of life.

The practice of yoga is rooted in the acquisition of knowledge and truth. Knowledge can be thought of as an accurate, unbiased, non-judgmental perception and understanding of what is truly taking place in a given moment. Yoga provides its practitioner with a process for learning *how* to perceive truth. The entire practice of yoga intends to reduce painful manifestations of misapprehension in our lives by increasing our ability to clearly perceive objects in their true nature and without projecting judgment. This enhances the mind's capacity for empathy as well as critical thinking.

The mechanism by which yoga works is one that enables individuals to gradually disidentify, or re-perceive, experience from a clear, non-judgmental stance. Re-perception then allows the content of the internal and external experience to be observed with clarity and objectivity. Put another way, "mindfulness practices are postulated to create a fundamental shift in awareness from the content of experience to the objective observation of experience, which in turn affects other related psychological processes" (Felver et al., 2015).

The distinguishing feature of yoga as compared to mindfulness or other contemplative practices is that yoga simultaneously engages both the mind and the body by combining physical exercise with meditation. By connecting the mind and body, yoga practitioners achieve *union*. *Union*, as implied by yoga, is multi-faceted. First of all, yoga

works to unite the entire person, including both the mind and the body. Yoga also aims to unite each practitioner with the world and, ultimately, with the universe.

Yoga cultivates the skills mentioned above primarily by requiring individuals to exercise attentional control. Practitioners try to sustain the focus of their attention on particular objects, most commonly it is the breath, but it can also be an idea, such as the suffering or freedom from suffering of certain individuals. The goal here, put simply, is to direct attention on certain stimuli while simultaneously suppressing other stimuli in order to gain the ability to focus completely on one thing without getting distracted. Surprisingly, another major object of attentional focus includes the moment-to-moment fluctuations in thinking themselves. The idea behind this is that by paying attention to the way the mind shifts and how frequently it shifts, practitioners can develop the ability to concentrate, to understand and manage stress and emotion, to cultivate pro-social mentalities, and gain knowledge about oneself. When we bring awareness to our actions, thoughts, and emotions, we are able to observe our mental processes to better understand ourselves. We can shed old understandings and misconceptions and gain new, more accurate, insight. This has the potential to dramatically improve the emotional functioning of all people, regardless of their initial level of competence; however, I would like to examine adolescents in particular, a group that arguably has the most to gain from yoga and other contemplative practices.

Creativity is the manifestation of an intention to transcend the limitations of information (Horan, 2009). As limitations are overcome, a state of yoga results. When we look at the original yoga texts, we find that yoga, when translated from Sanskrit, means “union” or “connection”. The goal of yoga is to absolve subject-object dichotomy by

releasing all judgments and assumptions and everything you think you know about something in order to see the object in a new light. To see new patterns and new relationships we must first suspend our existing knowledge long enough to become the object we are studying. In assimilating ourselves, we gain true knowledge of the object that could not otherwise be gained from the outside. We gain new perspectives and increase our empathy and adaptability, which are important qualities in creative people (Root-Bernstein, 1999). Yoga creates a unitary state of consciousness. Everything has limitless potential when we practice this mindset. This is what really allows creativity to flow. The current scientific understanding of creativity can be summarized by the following quote, “Inner creativity – a subjective transformation of the self. The creative objectively surrenders to the object, thereby transforming his or her perceptions of it and consequently engendering a deeper relationship with it” (Maharaj, 2015).

The process by which an individual achieves a state of yoga is outlined in Patanjali’s book, the *Yoga Sutra*. Written in the second century BCE, the *Yoga Sutra* is considered to be the heart of yoga. Without a doubt, Patanjali’s work remains central to modern conceptualizations of self-discipline and mindfulness (Emerson & Hopper, 2011). There is no prescription for starting a yoga practice, for the practice of yoga only requires us to act and to be attentive to our actions. Patanjali emphasizes that all aspects of human life are important in a yoga practice, including our relationships with others, our behavior, our health, and our breathing. Gradually, interest in one aspect of life will spark the practitioner’s interest in another. A yoga practice may begin with the study of meditation, asana, or with pranayama. Asanas are body postures. They have dual qualities of alertness and relaxation. We know we are reaching alertness and relaxation by

observing reactions of the body and breath during various postures that comprise asana practice. Once we can recognize our body's response, we can begin learning how to control it. Pranayama is the conscious, deliberate regulation of the breath. Pranayama is intended to replace unconscious breathing patterns and is only possible after a reasonable mastery of asana practice (Desikachar, 1995). Asana and pranayama reduce obstacles that inhibit clear perception and prepare the mind for the process of direction toward a chosen goal. The most important thing about a yoga practice is that the practitioner must not become focused only on one aspect and forget the others. It is suggested that yoga has survived for thousands of years for precisely this reason – it is adaptable for the needs of everyone.

Many different interpretations of the word yoga have been handed down over the centuries, including “to come together”, “to unite”, and “to unify” (Desikachar, 1995). While the West has come to know yoga as mainly a physical exercise, the true purpose of many of the physical postures familiar to us (i.e. downward facing dog, child's pose, corpse pose) is to prepare the mind for a deep state of focus. The object of such mental focus can be anything – a topic of interest, a concept, or something beyond the level of the senses, such as God or freedom. The objective is to *unify* the mind, or “to tie the strands of the mind together” (Desikachar, 1995). This means directing our thoughts toward whatever we are about to do, before we do it. It implies forming an intention in the mind before beginning any of the physical work. Once an intention to do something exists, it is another goal of yoga to act in such a way that all of our attention is directed toward the activity in which we are currently engaged. According to Desikachar, “Yoga attempts to create a state in which we are always present – really present – in every

action, in every moment” (1995, p. 6). This is perhaps the single most important thing about yoga, and it serves as a foundation for the entire practice. This is also the origin of modern-day mindfulness.

There are various lineages of yoga, including vinyasa, power, Iyengar, Bikram, Hatha, Raja, restorative, and many more. *Hatha* yoga gave rise to many of the other lineages, and this curriculum is written based on the hatha yoga principles. *Hatha* yoga is balanced; an integration of effort and ease. ‘*Ha*’ represents solar energy, expansive and invigorating. ‘*tha*’ represents lunar energy, integrative and calming. Taken together, *Hatha* yoga provides the practitioner with a balanced practice that conveys the integration of opposites. It is a practice that is both awakening and calming. Hatha yoga will be the school of yoga used in the creation of this curriculum. Raja yoga will also be used. The focus of Raja yoga is on training the mind to be effortlessly quiet, focused, and self-aware.

Practicing Yoga

Patanjali outlines the 8 limbs of yoga in his book the *Yoga Sutra* (Desikachar, 1995). Each limb represents something that must be practiced in order to reap the maximum benefits of yoga. They are as follows:

1. **The Yamas:** Our attitude and behavior toward things and people outside ourselves (Figure 1).
2. **The Niyamas:** How we relate to ourselves inwardly (Figure 1).

| THE YAMAS | THE NIYAMAS |
|--|---|
| Ahimsa: <i>non-harming; kindness, friendliness, and thoughtful consideration of other people and things.</i> | Sauca: <i>cleanliness of mind and body; practicing asanas or pranayama are essential to sauca.</i> |
| Satya: <i>truthfulness; consideration for what we say, how we say it, and in what way it could affect others.</i> | Santosha: <i>contentment; to accept what happens and be content with what we have.</i> |
| Asteya: <i>non-stealing; taking nothing that does not belong to us, also includes not taking advantage of others.</i> | Tapas: <i>self-discipline; refers to the activity of keeping the body fit through attention to body posture, attention to eating habits, attention to breathing patterns, and the practice of asana and pranayama.</i> |
| Brahmacharya: <i>managing energy; avoiding distraction and behaving responsibly with respect to our goals.</i> | Svadhyaya: <i>self-study; refers to all learning, all reflection, and all contact that helps you learn more about yourself.</i> |
| Aparigraha: <i>non-hoarding; taking only what is necessary and what has been earned.</i> | Isvarapranidhana: <i>surrender; accepting that we have done our best and that there are things we cannot control.</i> |

Figure 1. The Five Yamas and the Five Niyamas.

3. **Asana:** Physical postures. The postures in yoga provide a systematic way to move the body through its entire range of motion. Over time, the postures, called asanas, increase the freedom of movement and build flexibility, strength, and balance in every part of the body. The postures can be divided into several categories, each having a different effect on the body. Typically, the asana categories are forward bends, back bends, side stretches, twists,

standing poses, balancing poses, inversions, relaxation poses, and meditative poses (Figure 2) (McCall, 2007).

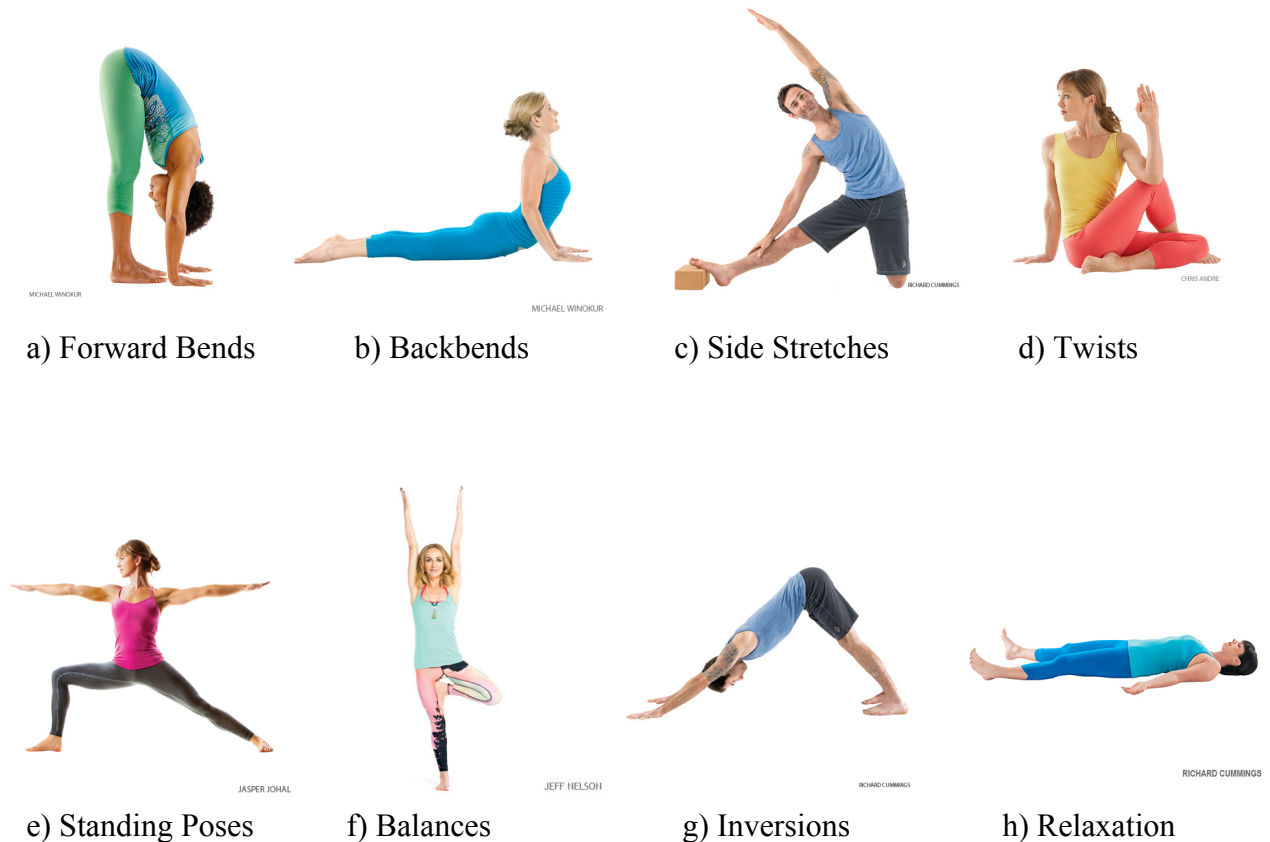


Figure 2. Posture Categories in Asana.
(Source: www.yogajournal.com)

Many poses combine elements from multiple categories. For example, revolved triangle pose (parivrtta trikonasana), as shown in Figure 3 below, is a standing pose that involves forward bending at the hips, twisting of the pelvis, and inverting the head below the trunk. Asana, when practiced correctly, contains both qualities of alertness and relaxation. The practitioner must observe the reactions of their body and breath during various postures to recognize their body's response. Once the practitioner is able to recognize the body's response, they can begin to control it. In a study by Vanessa M.

Villate called *Yoga for College Students: An Empowering Form of Movement and Connection*, a participant's response to her experience with yoga was that she learned how to "...be aware of things and thoughts around [her] but not let them affect [her] thought process" (Villate, 2015). This is the beginning of learning to understand what is truly going on in the mind, for "the body expresses what is in the mind" (Desikachar 1995). If the body is tense, the mind is tense. If the breath rate is high, perhaps the mind is anxious. By controlling the body and breath during asana practice, yoga practitioners enable themselves to exert control over their mind. Additionally, these postures can be linked together in a sequence to provide cumulative benefits, allowing the practitioner to engage in a seamless, connected routine that is guided by the breath. Practicing yoga in this way takes time, and beginners would benefit from extended time exploring poses individually.



a) Revolved Triangle Pose (*Parivrtta Trikonasana*)



b) Dancer Pose (*Natarajasana*)

Figure 3. Asanas with Combined Elements from Multiple Categories.
(Source: www.yogajournal.com)

4. **Pranayama:** Breathing exercises. Pranayama practices can quiet the mind, calm the nervous system, and provide students with an always-present sensory tool for focusing their attention. Pranayama involves the regulation of all parts of the breath from the inhalation to the exhalation. The length of

inhalation/exhalation as well as the length of the pause before and after the breath can be controlled. One student's response to Villate's study was "at work I often get very busy and have a million things to do at once, and since I have been practicing yoga, whenever we start to get busy, I stop and take a few deep breaths and really try to concentrate on every single thing that I am doing individually, and I have found that I end up making way less mistakes when I do this" (Villate, 2015). Asana and pranayama reduce obstacles that inhibit clear perception and prepare the mind to focus on a chosen goal (Desikachar, 1995), which is the goal of the remaining 4 limbs of yoga.

5. **Pratyahara:** Turning the senses inward. Often, pratyahara is described as "withdrawal of the senses", but it is more easily understood when described as the process of turning off external messages from the senses, especially the eyes and ears, in order to tune in to the internal environment. Pratyahara is one of the major goals of mindfulness techniques.
6. **Dharana:** Concentration. The essential idea is to hold concentration or attention in one direction. Dharana must precede dhyana, because the mind must focus on an object before it can be contemplated in meditation.
7. **Dhyana:** Meditation. Meditation refers to "contemplative mental practices that aim to enable individuals to develop greater awareness of their own cognitive and affective states through repeated examination of first-person experience" (Baird et al., 2014). Typically, one first prepares the mind for meditation by practicing asana and pranayama, but that is not always the case. Meditative practices ultimately enhance the capacity of the mind to achieve a

state free from distractions, which is the goal of yoga as defined by Patanjali, and “such a mind can probe deeply into objects and concepts; indeed, there are innumerable possibilities for it. Then there arises in the individual a knowledge of the objects of a dimension previously unknown” (Desikachar 1995). This is precisely where the idea to study the effects of yoga on cognitive performance, particularly creativity, came from. Creativity will be explored in greater detail in section two of this chapter.

8. **Samadhi:** Blissful absorption, or complete integration with the object to be understood.

It is important to note that physical asana is only one of the eight limbs. Asana is not the main focus, and in fact asana is not even considered to be yoga unless the physical postures are paired with the breath. This is important because it is the main distinguishing feature between mindfulness practices and actual yoga practices. Yoga implies a complete synchronization of body and mind, and the medium by which this synchronization is achieved is typically the breath.

Solving 21st Century Problems with Yoga

The contemplative practices of yoga can be thought of as mental and behavioral training techniques meant to enhance basic cognitive and emotional processes such as attention and the regulation of certain forms of negative affect, while at the same time enabling the practitioner to experience certain virtuous character traits such as honesty, kindness, and compassion. A mere 20 minutes of yoga has been found to improve executive cognitive functioning, including reaction time and accuracy (Gothe et al., 2012). Improvements in executive functioning were not found in participants who

participated in aerobic exercise alone. One proposed mechanism by which yoga improves cognitive ability is by increasing mood. Lowered mood is associated with a decline in cognition, and Hatha yoga has been shown to boost mood (Berger & Owen, 1988).

Another possible explanation is that yoga places emphasis on body awareness and attention to specific breathing techniques or specific parts of the body, thereby enhancing more general attentional abilities that extend across a variety of situations. Yoga enables the body to reach a state of relaxation and tends to encourage self-control, concentration, body awareness, and stress reduction (Gothe et al., 2012).

Figure 4 shows a more concrete list of the ways in which yoga promotes mental and physical health (McCall, 2007, 30). Benefits that are most relevant to high-school aged adolescents are indicated in bold.

| | |
|---|--|
| 1. Increases flexibility | 21. Improves nervous system function |
| 2. Strengthens muscles | 22. Improves brain function |
| 3. Improves balance | 23. Activates the left prefrontal cortex |
| 4. Improves posture | 24. Changes neurotransmitter levels |
| 5. Improves lung function | 25. Lowers cortisol levels (a stress hormone) |
| 6. Leads to slower, deeper breathing | 26. Lowers blood sugar |
| 7. Improves immunity | 27. Lowers blood pressure |
| 8. Discourages mouth breathing | 28. Lowers cholesterol levels |
| 9. Increases oxygenation of tissues | 29. Thins the blood |
| 10. Improves joint health | 30. Improves bowel function |
| 11. Nourishes intervertebral disks | 31. Releases unconscious muscle gripping |
| 12. Improves return of venous blood | 32. Uses imagery to effect change in the body |
| 13. Increases circulation of lymph | 33. Relieves pain |
| 14. Improves function of the feet | 34. Lowers need for medication |
| 15. Improves proprioception | 35. Fosters healing relationships |
| 16. Increases bodily control | 36. Improves psychological health |
| 17. Strengthens bones | 37. Leads to healthier habits |
| 18. Conditions cardiovascular system | 38. Fosters spiritual growth |
| 19. Promotes weight loss | 39. Elicits the placebo effect |
| 20. Relaxes the nervous system | 40. Encourages involvement in healing process |

Figure 4. How Yoga Promotes Mental and Physical Health.

Improves immunity. Many yoga practices are likely to improve the functioning of the immune system, but meditation so far has the strongest scientific evidence (McCall, 2007). A study done at the University of Wisconsin examined a group of high-tech workers who learned simple meditation techniques. The group developed a higher level of influenza antibodies after getting a flu shot than the control group, who did not practice meditation. This is an indication of better ability to fight potential influenza infection. “The power of that study is that it shows that the mind can influence a healing process all the way down to the level of what has to be gene expression and cell replication” (McCall, 2007).

Increases control of bodily functions. Yoga increases awareness, and with greater awareness one is able to exert more control over the body and its daily functions. By practicing certain yoga exercises, one might be able to lower their blood pressure, bring more blood flow to certain areas of the body to promote healing, or induce relaxation to help induce sleep.

Conditions the cardiovascular system. It is well known that aerobic exercise lowers the risk of heart disease and relieves depression (McCall, 2007). There are lineages of yoga that emphasize aerobic asana practice, such as Ashtanga yoga and vinyasa-style classes. These are vigorous practices that link movement with the breath.

Additionally, yoga has been shown to lower blood pressure. Systolic hypertension, known as high blood pressure, is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease and elevated levels of fat in the blood. Medical expenses for hypertension in America are estimated at approximately \$109 billion dollars. Hypertension is a significant problem

and will remain so unless we find a sustainable, preventative solution (Dusek, et al., 2008).

Promotes weight loss. For multiple reasons, yoga has been found to aid weight loss in several studies. The physical concept of burning calories through exercise is easily supported, but it is also hypothesized that yoga addresses a spiritual and emotional dimension to carrying excess weight. Yoga also brings consciousness to eating, which helps to eliminate mindless overeating.

Lowers levels of the stress hormone cortisol. A yoga module consisting of yoga asanas, pranayama, meditation, and a value orientation program was administered to an experimental group for seven weeks. When compared to the control group, the yoga group performed better in all academic subjects, including mathematics, science, and social studies. Furthermore, students that scored lower on the Stress Battery scored better than those with higher levels of stress, indicating that stress negatively impacts learning (Kauts & Sharma, 2009).

The Neuroscience of Yoga

The increasing number and intensity of stressors experienced by adolescents today combined with a greater awareness of mental disorders in recent years has led to a dramatic rise in mental health problems among young people (Broderick, 2009). A rise in mental health problems may stem from stressful events associated with the rapid social change of the 21st century, coupled with the breakdown of many traditional anchors such as families, neighborhoods, and other institutions (Kocavs, 1997). The increase in mental health problems among adolescents is so staggering that “one in ten children suffers from a mental health condition that meets diagnostic criteria, and one in five suffers from

problems that significantly impair day-to-day functioning,” (U.S. Public Health Service, 2010). Furthermore, most young people requiring services for their mental health problems do not receive the help they need, and those that do receive services access it primarily through their schools (Rones & Hoagwood, 2000). This demonstrates the important role that schools play in the social and emotional health of students, and also shows that schools are falling short in teaching students a skill set for social and emotional well being.

When students suffer from mental health problems, the quality of their learning is diminished no matter how skilled the teacher or how well-developed the curriculum. The U.S. Surgeon General’s report from 2000 explicitly urges schools to consider mental health as a critical component of overall health for all students, and advocated for the active promotion of social, emotional, and behavioral wellbeing in the school setting.

Mirroring and Imitation: Our Innate Ability to Learn

Everything about us – our brains, our minds, and our bodies – is geared toward cooperation in social systems, and imitation happens to be the first, and arguably the most important, social skill we have. Because humans are not born with fully developed brains, adults must be used as models to help establish baseline patterns of self-regulation. This is accomplished with the use of *mirror neurons*, which are neurons that automatically recreate the mental patterns of those around us. Mirror neurons start firing as soon as we are born. In fact, “we automatically simulate others, and understand what others feel by feeling a version of what they are experiencing, in ourselves” (Brooks, 2012, 38-39). They are the “...brain-to-brain links that give us our capacity for empathy and enable us

to automatically pick up and reflect the behavior of our parents, teachers, and peers” (Van der Kolk, 2015, 114).

This type of deeply instinctual imitation forms the basis of attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby in the 1940s (Van der Kolk, 2015). Attachment patterns often persist into adulthood; however, many life experiences can intervene to change the outcomes of unhealthy attachment patterns.

Emotional Attunement: Attachment Theory and the Development of Resilience

Infants immediately fall into sync with the state of their primary caregiver’s autonomic system. Babies cannot regulate their own emotional states, let alone changes in heart rate, hormone levels, and nervous-system activity, all of which accompany emotions. If a baby’s positive relationship with their primary caregiver is disrupted and never reestablished, they will learn that their terror, pleading, and crying are not noticed by their caregiver and that nothing they can do will bring attention and help (Van der Kolk, 2015). Basically, they are being conditioned to believe they cannot improve their own circumstances when they face challenges later in life. On the other hand, children whose parents are reliable sources of comfort and strength have a lifetime advantage, because they have learned that their cries will be recognized and their needs will be met. They learn that their actions (i.e. crying, pointing, laughing) can bring about a response from others that can ultimately improve their condition. They develop an ability to take care of, and advocate for, themselves. They develop *resilience*.

The Effects of Disorganized Attachment

Van der Kolk (2015) explains that *disorganized* attachment is by far the most detrimental pattern of attachment. The bulk of children and a substantial proportion of the

adults that are seen in psychiatric clinics developed a disorganized pattern of attachment from their primary caregiver. Kids from lower socioeconomic groups are more likely to be disorganized in their attachment, with parents often severely stressed by economic and family instability. Disorganized attachment seems to stem from an inability to figure out how to attach and engage with caregivers because their caregivers themselves were simultaneously necessary for survival and also a source of fear or distress (Hesse & Main, 2000). The most damaging contributor to disorganized attachment is emotional withdrawal of the primary caregiver.

Emotional distance during infancy has profound and long-lasting impacts. Infants with disrupted emotional communication patterns grew up to be young adults with an unstable sense of self, self-damaging impulsivity (including excessive spending, promiscuous sex, substance abuse, reckless driving, and eating disorders), inappropriate and intense anger, and recurrent suicidal behavior (Lyons-Ruth & Block, 1996). Emotional withdrawal in particular was specifically linked to aggressive behavior against self and others. The development of serious psychological problems after experiencing traumatic events is significantly higher in those that show disorganized attachment patterns. It is as if their early relationships left them with a vulnerable physiology that is more susceptible to stress and trauma.

Emotional withdrawal can result from mothers who are overly intrusive and hostile as well as from mothers who are helpless, fearful, and dependent. Hostile/intrusive mothers were more likely to have childhood histories of physical abuse or of witnessing domestic violence while the withdrawn/dependent mothers were more likely to have histories of sexual abuse or loss of a parent (Lyons-Ruth & Block, 1996).

Children that have this pattern of attachment grow up not knowing who is safe or whom they belong to, which leads to “fright without solution” (Van der Kolk, 2015). The problems arising from disorganized attachment are the exact opposite of what yoga intends to enhance.

Trauma

Trauma is our nation’s most grave and expensive public health issue. Robert Anda explains that its overall costs exceed those of cancer or heart disease, and eradicating child abuse in America would reduce the overall rate of depression by more than half, alcoholism by two-thirds, and suicide, IV drug use, and domestic violence by three-quarters (Van der Kolk, 2015).

Trauma breaks down the self-regulatory system and throws its victims into a whirlwind of emotional insecurity. The effects of trauma are often difficult to distinguish from the problems that arise from disorganized attachment. Trauma and disorganized attachment are often intertwined, for both are prevalent in families of low socioeconomic status. “For abused children, the whole world is filled with triggers. As long as they can imagine only disastrous outcomes to relatively benign situations, anybody walking into a room, any stranger, any image, on a screen or on a billboard might be perceived as a harbinger of catastrophe.” “...to learn whether the different worldview of normal children could account for their resilience and, ... Is it possible to help the minds and brains of brutalized children to redraw their inner maps and incorporate a sense of trust and confidence in the future?” (Van der Kolk, 2015, 110) Can we cultivate resilience in traumatized children?

Trauma survivors, especially kids, often have poor executive functioning skills. “Their rational brains lack proper control over their emotional brains, which also occurs when abuse and trauma have made the emotional centers hyper alert to danger and organized for fight or flight. This can result in symptoms that resemble ADHD (Van der Kolk, 2015).

Training in rhythmicity and reciprocity have been proposed by Van der Kolk (2015) as a way to heal damaged attachment systems and overactive nervous systems that arise as a result of neglect and/or trauma. He states that being in sync with oneself and with others requires the integration of senses, including vision, hearing, touch, and balance, which will ultimately foster a sense of attunement and community. This research is aligned with my proposal that teaching yoga provides an opportunity for individuals with exposure to trauma to learn how to safely connect with themselves and with others in order to learn self-regulatory skills such as emotion regulation, planning before acting, following directions in order to achieve a goal, hyperactivity control and impulse control.

Using yoga to overcome trauma. Many high-risk adolescents suffer from overwhelming emotions as a result of exposure to complex trauma. Overwhelm happens when the child does not want to feel something in his or her system because the experience is too painful. Their awareness cuts out and there is a sense of, “I just want to get out of this” (McKenna, 2015). Bessel A. van der Kolk, founder and medical director of the Trauma Center, refers to trauma as “a disease of not being able to be present” (Emerson & Hopper, 2011). By necessity, the goal of trauma treatment is to help people live in the present without feeling or behaving according to the irrelevant demands of the

past. Yoga is, according to Emerson and Hopper, “an unparalleled practice for helping us to be somatically present” (2011, 40).

The idea of yoga therapy is to help individuals notice that they have a body, teach them to befriend their body, and help them incorporate exercises to develop healthy relationships with their body. Developing the understanding that the body *can* “hold” the trauma is integral to trauma treatment (Emerson & Hopper, 2011). People who feel safe in their bodies can begin to translate the memories that previously overwhelmed them into language.

Research has identified four main themes that are especially important in yoga therapy for trauma survivors. They are: experiencing the present moment, making choices, taking effective action, and creating rhythms (Emerson & Hopper, 2011).

Yoga has the potential to overcome trauma by creating a stable enough nervous system so that students can handle overwhelming emotions on their own when things get challenging. The key to achieving this level of independence is adequately teaching students the self-regulatory skills they will require.

Tools when working with overwhelm students or students with traumatic histories might include labeling, or *name it to tame it*. The following is an example of a student-teacher interaction using *name it to tame it*: Teacher: “If your feeling were an animal, what would it be?” Student: “A dog.” Teacher: “What is its name?” Student: “Bob.” Teacher: “What is Bob doing?” Student: “Bob is tearing up the grass.” Teacher: “Now what is he doing?” Student: “Now he’s laying down.” Teacher: “Is Bob back?” and so on. The idea is to establish a relationship with whatever we are using to represent the emotion. When we come up with a name, an image, an animal, or something else to

represent the emotion, we've already established a relationship with that thing. Over time, we can bring it back up. Teacher: "Is Bob back? Can we sit and breathe with Bob again? If it were a texture, how would it feel?" Chris McKenna (2015) equates these various emotions to a huge iTunes library that is so disorganized that we don't even know what's in it anymore. When we engage an image to use as a reference, or a "playlist", we help students organize their emotions and all the thoughts and sensations that come along with them. We can then use that representative image to slowly tap into sensations that come along with an overwhelming emotion, allowing students to be with that emotion or that feeling so they can learn how to work with it (McKenna, 2015).

Other tools that might be used when working with trauma survivors include creating stable and predictable rhythms, combining warmth and discipline, and developing secure emotional bonds to fall back on in times of stress (McKenna, 2015).

Teachers as Positive Role Models

Marco Iacoboni is an expert on the study of mirror neurons, and he explains that mirror neurons do not fire at the sight of any particular object, but they do fire at the sight of a whole action – for example, another person grabbing an apple. He says, "[mirror] neurons seem to be matching the execution and the observation of an action. The functional properties of these neurons suggest that they may implement a simple, non-inferential mechanism of action recognition based on neural identity. This mechanism may be a building block for imitative behavior" (Iacoboni, 2002). With this type of deep imitation, it is as if we are sharing the same mental process as the person we are imitating.

Research indicates that skills such as sustained attention, emotion regulation, empathy, and compassion can be cultivated with the regular and consistent practice of yoga and other mindfulness techniques (Baird, et al. 2014). These skills can eventually become automatic habits in much the same way as other skills that are learned through sustained repetitive practice over time. The idea that regular practice and repetition helps lay down lasting connections in the brain is supported by the neuroscientific research (Klingberg, 2010). Regular practice, on the daily level, helps students form habits of mind that will last long after their school years. With frequent and sustained practice, skills such as mindfulness and empathy can become routinized at the neural levels and, subsequently, to regulate behavior in relatively automatic ways by being highly accessible and available (Higgins, 1996).

If this is true, then why are we not tapping into this potential as educators? By being mindful educators ourselves, we will be able to teach our students important habits of mind that are deeply woven into their brains. We have the ability to develop healthy neural activation patterns in the minds of our students by doing nothing more than being consistent in our actions. If we as educators are consistent in our teaching practices, we can help our students develop positive habits of mind that enable them to succeed. This also means that educators should actually practice what they teach by learning how to cultivate and emulate the exact mindset that they want their students to have, because the two will undoubtedly resemble one another. With consistency and time, teachers will be able to trigger implicit memories within their students of what it means to be calm and in control, leading to activation of the relaxation response and opening the doors for critical thinking and concentration to emerge.

ENVoY is a teaching method that gives teachers the tools they need to develop the consistent actions mentioned above. The idea is that the teacher remains calm, focused, and attentive at all times, and uses as many non-verbal actions as possible to engage and direct student behavior. For example, the teacher always uses the same hand gesture when he or she wants the students to “turn and talk” with their neighbor (Grinder, 1993). Eventually, the students do not even need to be told verbally what to do because they are able to read the non-verbal cues. Iacoboni’s research would suggest that the ENVoY techniques are tapping into the deeply embedded instinct that we all have to imitate one another. Utilization of this pre-programmed instinct can help students learn healthy and efficient patterns of self-regulation that they can fall back on later in life.

Pre-frontal Cortex: The Regulator

Fostering social, emotional, and behavioral wellbeing in schools is necessary because humans are not born with a fully developed brain, and, in particular, our system of self-regulation is far from being fully developed. Developmentally, students’ mental faculties are far from proficient when they reach high school. In fact, the parts of the brain that are responsible for self-regulation are not fully developed until the age of 25 (McKenna, 2015). Humans must undergo a series of important and intense developmental changes in brain structure and function during adolescence before successfully acquiring the ability to regulate emotion and cognition. Gray matter volume peaks between ages 9-11, while white matter volume, which supports connections between various regions of the brain, continues to increase into early adulthood and possibly beyond. In particular, an increase in white matter volume allows for more efficient communication between the prefrontal cortex (PFC) and other cortical and sub-

cortical regions of the brain, enabling better regulation of thought, emotion, and behavior (Paus, 2008). The PFC is the part of the brain that makes sure the other parts are well regulated, almost like a “governor” or a “president” (McKenna, 2015). It is responsible for regulating the mind, body, emotions, and all forms of future planning. The PFC’s basic role is to orchestrate thoughts and actions in accordance with internal goals. This is also called *executive functioning*. EF refers to the ability to differentiate between conflicting thoughts, determine good and bad, same and different, future consequences of current activities, working toward a defined goal, predicting outcomes, expectations based on action, and the ability to suppress urges that could lead to socially unacceptable outcomes. The *dynamic filtering theory* is a hypothesis that executive functioning skills require the PFC to engage in a high-level filtering mechanism that selects, maintains, updates, and reroutes activations. This theory has also been used to explain emotion regulation. The PFC is the part of us that makes us distinctly human, and if it is underdeveloped or deregulated, many mental illnesses can arise (Van der Kolk, 2015).

Mental illnesses stemming from a weak or undeveloped PFC come from disruptions of the following systems: 1) the limbic system, disruption of which can lead to PTSD, anxiety, panic, and depression; 2) the “default mode” network, potentially contributing to the onset of schizophrenia, OCD, and social anxiety; and 3) mesolimbic dopamine levels, fluctuations of which can lead to addiction, ADHD, and bipolar disorder (Phan, 2003). In general, a weak PFC leads to emotional reactivity, sensitivity to stress (feeling like you can’t bounce back), general negative affect, and increased self-referential processing, which is when an individual thinks about themselves all the time

with no particular reason or stimulus. In an increasingly stressful world, a weak or undeveloped PFC poses a significant obstacle to overcome.

Adolescents have extremely weak PFCs. They also have extremely sensitive PFCs. During adolescence, the PFC and subcortical structures such as the hippocampus are particularly plastic and highly vulnerable to poorly managed stress and/or prolonged, heightened activation of the nervous system (Anderson, 2008). The PFC and subcortical structures are highly sensitive to positive influences as well as negative ones. Again, this is all by design, because humans are not finished developing until about the age of 25. This is insurmountable evidence that action needs to be taken during this critical age of development.

There are things that educators can do to help strengthen the PFC during development. This is the goal of social-emotional learning and yoga. A little bit of practice can help the natural course of development. We can provide short moments of awareness repeated many times throughout the day until they become automatic and continuous, by learning to embody our own “neutral gear” – a place where attention naturally rests in the somatic or sensory field, and by insert formal contemplative practice into the school day as short, low-maintenance rituals such as starting and ending class.

Healthy Nervous System Regulation

We always want our learning space to be stable and predictable, but healthy nervous systems are intended to fluctuate throughout the day between fight or flight status (sympathetic nervous system activation) and deep relaxation (parasympathetic nervous system activation) (McKenna, 2015). After sympathetic nervous system activation, such as completing an end of the year chemistry final, the parasympathetic

nervous system should kick into gear and bring the individual back down to complete relaxation. Both the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems should activate and deactivate numerous times in one day. The key is to know how to trigger each type of activation within our students.

Unfortunately, we know that children today are often in a state of continuous sympathetic nervous system activation. They are bombarded with distractions from the moment they wake up in the morning to the moment they fall asleep. Yoga is a multi-faceted practice that activates the relaxation response (RR) associated with parasympathetic nervous system activation. The relaxation response is the opposite of the fight or flight response. It is a series of physiological changes that relaxes the body and brings it into a resting state. The relaxation response induced by yoga decreases oxygen consumption, heart rate, respiration rate, responsiveness to norepinephrine (adrenaline), and systolic hypertension (Dusek et al., 2008). We can employ yoga practices when we need to regain control of our students and help guide them into a calm, mindful, and attentive mentality.

As teachers, we are the role models for our students when they are away from their parents. We are with them day in and day out, so doesn't it make sense that they would need to look to us for guidance on how to behave? Or, at the very least, look to us for guidelines, structure, and consistency? How can we provide the most productive environment possible for our students, and what is holding us back from doing so? If we teach yoga to students, we are handing them the tools they need to regain control of their present situation, no matter how stressful or disruptive it might be.

Stress and a near-constant state of distraction are two of the most pervasive obstacles to concentration that students face. This is important to consider because the ability to concentrate fully is necessary for any significant accomplishment that is undertaken in life. If a student is unable to concentrate, there is no way that they will be able to engage the mind fully for learning. Unfortunately, concentration is often elusive and hard to maintain due to both internal and external interruptions.

In order for concentration to occur, one must be able to fully engage the mind on the task at hand. This means that concentration requires full engagement in the task at hand while also blocking out other distractions, such as social media. Concentration is two-fold, meaning that the mind must be able to “allocate processing resources for quite a time (up to some minutes) to a specific task demand while ignoring new stimuli that also demand attention” (Krumm, 2011). Unsurprisingly, Patanjali defines yoga as “the ability to direct the mind exclusively toward an object and sustain that direction without any distractions” (Desikachar, 1995). The similarity in these two statements made thousands of years apart is striking.

Technology is and has been on the rise since the dawn of the 20th century. Technology is inextricably woven into our everyday lives, and it is especially vital for students in school today. While technology does enhance learning in a multitude of ways, it also provides continuous distractions. Students today are quite literally plugged into their technology 24/7. They are bombarded with texts, Facebook notifications and messages, Instagram likes, and Snapchat story updates, just to name a few popular trends.

David Strayer, a neuroscientist at the University of Utah and an expert in attention and distraction, estimates that it takes up to 30 minutes to reach the state of concentration

required to write an essay. He also estimates that digital distractions increase the time to complete a task by 50%. This means if our students are consistently bombarded by cell phone notifications throughout their work time, they are never reaching their deepest level of concentration and they will also need longer to complete the task at hand.

Teaching students how to pay attention is crucial if we expect them to learn. We have to teach students to give their minds a break so that they can use their brain's full, untapped potential.

The Mind-Body Connection

Increased reliance on technology not only disrupts concentration, but it takes away the opportunity for students to use their bodies. This is important, because “whatever we – babies, kids, adults, athletes, actors, CEOs, and you – do from the neck down has a striking impact on what goes on from the neck up” (Beilock, 2015, 6). External influences affect the contents of our minds. For example, our ability to juggle numbers lies in the same part of the brain as our ability to control our finger movements. They share neural real estate. Therefore, building finger dexterity through playing the piano or other instruments actually helps kids count more fluently in math (Beilock, 2015, 40). Getting the body involved helps the mind learn.

The importance of moving the body to affect the mind extends back thousands of years. For thousands of years, many religious groups have considered the body a temple that houses the mind. This suggests that in order to have a healthy mind, one must also have a healthy body. The mind and body are inextricably woven together, and whatever we do to one directly affects the other. In fact, contemporary neuroscience has demonstrated that our sense of self is anchored in a vital connection with our bodies

(Damasio, 1999). The ability to feel and interpret what our senses are telling us about our environment allows us to act on those sensations in order to navigate safely through life. Humans are inextricably immersed in a physical world, and no matter how hard we try to avoid it we cannot escape it. It is possible to avoid it for a while through numbing or compensatory sensation seeking, but the price we pay is that we lose awareness of what is going on inside the body and, with that, the sense of being fully, sensually alive. The mind perceives what the body experiences. The mind and body are united.

The mechanics of the body are front and center in creativity as well. The thinking process is extended over the body. Free movement leads to more creativity than restricted movement, because “we can literally use the fluid movements of our body to help free our mind from constraints” (Leung, 2012). Being motionless can inhibit our thinking. Just ten days of alternate nostril breathing was shown to improve spatial memory in children (Naveen et al., 1997). The researchers hypothesize that this is because alternate nostril breathing enhances awareness of both hemispheres of the brain.

When we look at the original yoga texts, we find that yoga, when translated from Sanskrit, means “union” or “connection”. Yoga practitioners attempt to create a unitary state of consciousness. Everything has limitless potential when we practice this mindset. This is what really allows creativity to flow. The current scientific understanding of creativity can be summarized by the following quote, “Inner creativity – a subjective transformation of the self. The creative objectively surrenders to the object, thereby transforming his or her perceptions of it and consequently engendering a deeper relationship with it” (Maharaj, 2015). Creativity is the manifestation of an intention to transcend the limitations of information (Horan, 2007). As limitations are overcome, a

state of yoga results. The goal of yoga is to absolve subject-object dichotomy by releasing all judgments and assumptions and everything you think you know about something in order to see the object in a new light. To see new patterns and new relationships we must first suspend our existing knowledge long enough to become the object we are studying. In assimilating ourselves, we gain true knowledge of the object that could not otherwise be gained from the outside. We gain new perspectives and increase our empathy and adaptability, which are important qualities in creative people (Root-Bernstein, 1999).

Concentration, or sustained attention, has a significant correlation with coordination, or the ability to do more than one task at a time (Krumm, 2011). The ability to do two tasks simultaneously, which is often required in school (i.e. writing down notes while listening to the teacher), is a core element of achieving a state of concentration. If students develop their coordination skills, their concentration skills will also improve. One possible explanation for this link is that practicing coordination helps the brain learn how to make new neural connections. Practicing coordination or assimilation of all modes of psychological regulation may also be the very reason yoga is able to improve self-regulatory skills.

Schools: The Modern Vehicle for Change

Culturally, schools are central establishments of human development. As such, they play a major role in cultivating the kinds of mental skills and dispositions that young people will need in order to live productive, satisfying, and meaningful lives in society. Throughout history, an enormous amount of energy has been devoted to the acquisition of knowledge, for knowledge can empower our actions and steer our work in the world.

Knowledge shares many similarities across time and place. The founding father of positive psychology, Martin Seligman, teamed up with researcher Christopher Peterson in 2004 to study 3,000 years of historically significant texts ranging from the Quran to the Klingon code in order to determine which character traits human beings have collectively determined to be most important across time and culture (Chase, 2016). They came up with 6 core values that serve as an umbrella for 24 character strengths, shown in Table 2 below:

| Core Value | Character Strengths |
|-------------------|---|
| Knowledge | creativity, curiosity, judgment, love of learning, perspective |
| Courage | bravery, perseverance, honesty, zest |
| Humanity | love, kindness, social intelligence |
| Justice | teamwork, fairness, leadership |
| Temperance | forgiveness, humility, prudence, self-regulation |
| Transcendence | appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, spirituality |

Figure 5. Valued Character Traits Common to Humanity Across Time and Culture (Parks, 2004).

If the responsibility to develop these character strengths in students is not enough, schools are also under pressure to perform well on high-stakes tests and to succeed in an increasingly competitive educational environment. The world that educators are preparing their students for is one of complete economic interdependence, expansive intercultural contact, and the dominance of knowledge-based societies. This puts schools under more extreme pressures than ever before. The Carnegie Task Force on Education (1989) wrote in its landmark report that, “school systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students. But when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge” (Adelman & Taylor, 2006, 296).

In theory, this sounds wonderful. Who wouldn't want a school that is responsible for meeting every need that directly affects learning? In reality, however, this creates a new kind of challenge for schools – which skills do students actually *need* in order to be successful in the 21st century? How do we determine what directly or indirectly affects learning? According to the Mind and Life Education Research Network, self-regulatory skills associated with attention and emotion, self-representations, and attitudes such as empathy and compassion are central to the goals of education today because they enhance the academic success of students.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) offers a framework for educators to build lessons that improve their students' self-regulatory skills. According to CASEL (2016), SEL approaches intend to have the following effects:



Figure 6. The Social and Emotional Learning Process (CASEL, 2015).

Additionally, CASEL (2016) states that socially and emotionally competent children and youth are skilled in five core areas:

1. They are self-aware. They are able to recognize their emotions, describe their interests and values, and accurately assess their strengths. They have a well-grounded sense of self-confidence and hope for the future.

2. They are able to self-regulate. They are able to manage stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles. They can set and monitor progress toward the achievement of personal and academic goals and express their emotions appropriately in a wide range of situations.
3. They are socially aware. They are able to take the perspective of and empathize with others and recognize and appreciate individual and group similarities and differences. They are able to seek out and appropriately use family, school, and community resources.
4. They have good relationship skills. They can establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation. They resist inappropriate social pressure; constructively prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflict; and seek and provide help when needed.
5. They demonstrate responsible decision-making at school, at home, and in the community. In making decisions, they consider ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and the likely consequences of various courses of action. They apply these decision-making skills in academic and social situations and are motivated to contribute to the well-being of their schools and communities.

In chapter 4, I list a set of SEL standards that I have created for the state of Minnesota. My standards are adapted from the SEL standards that are currently being used in the states of Illinois and Alaska. Chapter 4 also proposes a yoga-based curriculum as a way of meeting the standards.

The idea of teaching yoga to adolescent students in a public school setting raises a number of legitimate concerns. For starters, the word ‘yoga’ is historically and contextually intertwined with philanthropic and even religious ideologies. Although it is true that mindfulness and many of the techniques use in mindfulness interventions do have roots in Eastern religions or philosophical schools of thought, the concept and application themselves are completely secular in nature (Felver et al., 2013). One analogy would be to equate the practice of fasting with a form of religion. Abstaining from food or drink is a common practice in many world religions, but fasting in and of itself is not inherently religious in nature. In a similar way, yoga is not a form of any religious practice and educators should take all necessary precautions to ensure that every yoga practice done in a public school setting remain thoroughly removed and separate from all religious ideologies.

Safety is another concern when practicing yoga. When done correctly, the practitioner should gain many health benefits from their practice, including muscle development, balance, body awareness and control, flexibility, and strength. It is advisable that teachers of this content go through sufficient training on how to best guide students through all of the physical movements they will encounter in this curriculum. A 200-hour yoga teacher training or more is ideal; however, there are many limitations to achieving this such as cost, time, and availability of teacher training courses.

Counter indications are included in a number of lessons as a warning to teachers to make sure not to teach a certain pose to students with the indicated affliction. Many are listed, but ultimately the teacher will have to use his or her best judgment.

Additionally, there are many people that stand to benefit from such contemplative practices such as administrators, counselors, teachers, and most importantly, students. Students are the focus of this research; so much of the literature is centered on adolescents and their relationship with yoga.

Yoga activates the relaxation response, which calms the body and mind. This is a prerequisite for creativity and problem solving. Research has shown that yoga prepares the mind for a state that is vital for optimal cognitive performance. “Any cognitive-affect process, which momentarily elicits a nondichotomous experience of self and object, increases an autotelic motivation to create, due to a positive feedback loop that elicits joy and stimulates greater freedom of expression” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). In order to reach this kind of mental state, one must first find reprieve from a life of constant disruption. “The degree to which the creativity potential manifests depends on the capacity to willfully dissolve limitations. The creative act is an act of liberation – the defeat of habit by originality” (Koestler, 1964). We need creative problem solvers in today’s fast-paced and technologically advanced world.

A mind that is continuously disrupted is not allowed to wander on its own as it does when we are “bored”. It is only when we have “nothing” going on in our minds that we are free to generate new ideas. For example, Isaac Newton is said to have discovered gravity while sitting idly in a garden, and Albert Einstein’s famous theories of relativity supposedly came from a daydream. Experts worry that this generation of adolescents will be so distracted by social media that they will not be able to create anything original on their own (Maurer, 2015). Hobbies that require patience and practice are key to learning

how to clear the mind and reach deeper levels of concentration, such as those required for critical thinking, literacy, and scientific inquiry.

To claim that when we are bored we have “nothing” going on in our minds is actually misleading, for the brain itself is remarkably active. In fact, the resting brain is more active than the thinking brain. Immediately before those “aha” moments that lead to finding a solution to a problem, neural activity in the frontal cortex and in the occipital cortex (the back of the brain that processes visual stimuli) slows down because the brain is devoting more energy to creating a solution (Martindale, 1999). Truly novel solutions are hardly ever discovered purposefully, for a deliberate approach can search inside the whole box, but not outside of it.

We now have enough evidence that modern education is hindering students from reaching their full potential because we are often working against students’ natural strengths. We make them sit still for hours on end, memorize facts and recite them for an exam, and bombard them with distractions by providing them in many cases with their own iPads and other personal technological devices. The most effective way of thinking is not necessarily to overwork the brain until a solution is found. Sometimes, we need to relax and let our brain synthesize what we know – this is where meditation and breathing come into play as a way to clear and reset the mind. I propose that we incorporate techniques into schools that are proven to enhance concentration, mental clarity, and creativity. In doing this, we will strengthen cognitive performance while simultaneously improving the physical and emotional well being of our students.

Current Social and Emotional Learning Programs

While the study of yoga and mindfulness in the schools is still an emerging field, there have already been many attempts to integrate contemplative practices into the school setting. Mindfulness Education, MindUP, and the Inner Kid Program are just a few examples.

In one study, the Mindfulness Education (ME) curriculum was implemented with middle school students over the course of 10 weeks (Schonert-Reichl, 2010). A sample of 246 students with a mean age of 11.4 years was taught the ME curriculum for 40 minutes, once a week, as a normal classroom activity by general education teachers trained during a 1-day intensive session and ongoing bi-weekly consultation. Students practiced the mindfulness skills briefly throughout the week to encourage generalization of skills. The treatment group was given pre- and post-intervention questionnaires in which they self-reported optimism, positive and negative affect, and self-concept. When the treatment group was compared against a wait-list control group, researchers found that the treatment group had significantly greater optimism and positive emotions, as well as significant improvements on social-emotional competence.

This study suggests that mindfulness intervention programs can be integrated directly into a school setting as a universal intervention, which is what my proposed curriculum intends to do. This study also suggests that mainstream teachers can be taught how to effectively implement a mindfulness-based curriculum with only one day of intensive training, which is on par with what my curriculum would require.

MindUP is a program that helps kids develop the self-regulatory skills necessary to be mindful in their daily lives. The idea is that mindfulness leads to the kind of focused concentration is required for academic success. The curriculum is accredited by CASEL

– the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. The curriculum has four parts:

1) Kids learn about their brain, especially the pre-frontal cortex, whose activation is required for many self-regulatory skills. Kids are taught how to take ‘brain breaks’ to quiet their mind. They are also taught to use a variety of tools that help them lower their stress and learn better.

2) Kids learn how to be mindful by interacting with their senses. This gives them easy access to their attentional capacities by providing them with a built-in point of attention, helping them focus on academics. This helps them focus in school. Mindful sensory interactions cultivate creativity, inspiration, and resilience by enabling children to explore their own mental experience. In order to compete with a global community, students must learn how to be resilient.

3) Kids are taught about their place in the world and how they can have an impact. They keep gratitude journals and work to become more caring and empathetic individuals.

4) Kids learn how to control the breath. By controlling the breath, they’re learning that they can regulate something about their physiology, and in that process, they are able to gain control of their current situation and calm down.

The Inner Kids Program is based on a similar type of mindfulness curriculum that focuses on breath awareness activities, sensory awareness activities, awareness of thoughts, emotions, and worldview, promoting kindness to self and others, and developing the qualities of patience, generosity, and gratitude. There are three sections to each lesson in the program. Kids begin the lesson in a seated position and start drawing

attention inward, then they do some kind of activity, and finally, they lie down for an introspective practice.

What is the best way that we can affect the kids? We have touch, voice and mindfulness techniques. First, get kids to realize that attention is a resource. Where your attention goes, your intention goes. Go from thinking into sensing and perception and reality changes. Changing the channel affects how you feel. Let's look at how the nervous system actually works throughout the day. The nervous system goes into activation and deactivation patterns. There is a sense of doing a bunch of stuff, and then there is a settling. This creates the feeling that there are gaps, or short moments of awareness with a natural, biological attunement to the sensory and somatic fields. As educators, we can ritualize these gaps at times where there are natural deactivation patterns. We can cultivate mindfulness of breathing or focus on gratitude for the day. This only takes 30 seconds to 2 minutes.

Summary

We need creative problem-solvers in today's fast-paced and technologically advanced world. We are aware that many educational curriculums today hinder students from reaching their full potential because they make students work against their natural strengths. Students are forced to sit still for up to 8 hours each day, eliminating their ability to use their body as a tool for learning. Students are required to memorize facts and recall them for an exam, but they are not required to use the knowledge they accumulate in an innovative way. Students are bombarded with digital devices that distract them constantly, prohibiting them from engaging fully with their work.

Given the large body of research that exists on this subject, it is time to make a change. It is time to create an education system that provides students with an environment that allows them to flourish. I propose integrating techniques such as yoga that are proven to enhance concentration and mental clarity, as well as creativity. In doing this, we will strengthen the cognitive performance of high school students while simultaneously improving their physical and emotional wellbeing.

In chapter 3, I discuss the methods I used in investigating the question, “*How can high schools use yoga to foster social and emotional learning in students from all backgrounds?*” The information contained within this literature review helped determine which curriculum development model and methods to use in designing my curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Overview

Chapter two provided a comprehensive analysis and elaboration of the existing literature on the important issues to consider when answering the question, “*How can high schools use yoga to foster social and emotional learning in students from all backgrounds?*” The literature review highlighted three important areas of research that support the development of this curriculum. The first area of research examined the scientific and philosophical origins of yoga, the second discussed the modern neuroscience of yoga, and the third area of research involved an exploration into whether or not school is the ideal place to teach yoga, using current models as evidence. The information gained from this review provided the foundation for the development of my curriculum.

Chapter 3 expands on the knowledge gained in chapter 2 and describes a curriculum model and rationale for designing lessons for high school teachers to use when implementing yoga practices into their classrooms. For this curriculum, a three-stage design process called Understanding by Design was used. This chapter explains how the research question, “*How can high schools use yoga to foster social and emotional learning in students from all backgrounds?*” was investigated through curriculum development. Chapter three discusses the following: the curriculum

development model and rationale, an outline of the format and content of the curriculum, intended setting and audience, and other considerations one might use when teaching yoga to adolescents.

Curriculum Development Model

I used the Understanding by Design (UbD) model (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) to design my curriculum. The main goal of UbD is to foster student understanding by enabling students to make meaning of achievement goals and objectives as well as transfer their learning to real-life situations. The transfer of student learning to real-life situations is the part of UbD that I am most excited about, because when students are learning a skill such as breath control or mindfulness there is nothing more important than acquiring the ability to autonomously employ these skills outside of class.

UbD explains six facets of understanding that can be used to indicate student achievement: the capacity to explain, interpret, apply, shift perspective, empathize, and self-assess. These facets of understanding provide a framework for teachers to design authentic performance assessments that reveal student understanding. These facets are highly applicable to my work and will be discussed in more depth in chapter four.

In addition, UbD describes teachers as coaches of understanding rather than conveyors of content. This idea is strongly aligned with my own personal belief that students should be at the center of their own learning, actively engaged in inquiry-based lessons that are personally relevant to them as learners.

According to the UbD model, planning is best done backwards, starting with the desired results and the transfer tasks that embody the goals. Once those are established, the teacher can then determine how to collect evidence that student progress is taking

place. Finally, the teacher can develop a sequence of activities, experiences, and lessons that will lead to the achievement of the desired results for all students.

UbD: Backwards Planning in Three Stages

In order to achieve desired results, UbD emphasizes three stages of planning that must be aligned in order for the unit to be most effective. The three stages of planning are: 1) Identify desired results, 2) Determine ways to collect evidence of learning, and 3) Develop a learning plan.

In stage one, the focus is on making sure that student accomplishments are reflective of student understanding. This means that students should be able to both make meaning of big ideas and autonomously transfer their learning to new situations. Research shows that students need to grasp the big ideas if they are to make sense of their lessons and transfer their learning to novel situations that resemble real life experiences. I used transfer goals, essential questions, and meanings when developing my desired results.

Stage two focuses on establishing assessment tasks that provide valid evidence of student learning. It is important that students take responsibility for their own learning by showing their work and justifying and supporting it with commentary. Active student engagement in authentic scenarios is what I was striving for in developing my unit plans.

Stage three aims to ensure that the content and methods of instruction are logically aligned with stages one and two. The teaching plan should be designed to address three goals: acquisition, meaning making, and transfer. Again, it is crucial that the students play an active role in constructing their own understanding rather than simply being told what they should be taking away from a lesson. “WHERE TO” is a

helpful acronym for ensuring that important elements and logic are part of the learning plan. “Where” elements of the learning plan ensure that students know where they are headed in terms of the big picture and final performance expectations. “Hook” elements immediately immerse students in the ideas, issues, and questions that are at the heart of the unit. “Equip and Experience” ensures that students receive the tools, resources, and information they need in order to have successful independent learning experiences. “Rethink” includes ways to change up students’ perspectives and challenge prior assumptions. This is also an opportunity for students to revise prior work and perfect their understanding. “Evaluate” provides students with diagnostic and formative assessments and feedback that allow for readjustment. “Tailor” establishes personal relevance to the unit in order to build student investment. “Organize” sequences the work so that it is aligned with the textbook.

Keeping the techniques from UbD in mind, I began the curriculum development process by first identifying the desired results I wanted to see from students in each unit. These results included specific transfer goals, meanings, and essential questions. Secondly, I designed ways to collect valid evidence of student learning that was appropriate for the topic of my curriculum. Lastly, I designed a learning plan that included activities, experiences, and lessons that would enable students to reach their goals.

Curriculum Outline

The format of my curriculum follows the UbD model. It includes four unit plans and corresponding lesson plans for each unit. Unit 1 is titled “Self-Awareness” and focuses on gaining self-knowledge through an exploration of movement, introspection,

group discussions, independent journaling, and mindfulness. Unit 2 is titled “Self-Management” and focuses on how students can use what they know about themselves (their patterns of reaction, habits, strengths, weaknesses, etc.) to make positive and effective choices whenever they are faced with a challenge. Unit 3 is titled “Social Awareness” and focuses on understanding what others are feeling and appreciating and interacting positively with a wide range of people. Unit 4 is titled “Social Management” and it focuses on effectively handling emotions within relationships and establishing and maintaining healthy relationships based on cooperation, resistance to inappropriate social pressure, working through problems, and getting help when needed. Because my curriculum is focused on how yoga can be used to facilitate social and emotional learning, more lesson plans are provided for Units 1 and 2 because the achievement goals for those units easily align with stand-alone exercises. Lesson plans are provided for Units 3 and 4; however, the achievement goals for those units require frequent social interaction and observation, and lesson content should be determined by the teacher so that it is appropriate for the student body being taught.

Safety

Yoga, when done carefully, is one of the safest forms of physical exercise anyone can pursue (McCall, 2007). Of course, as with any form of physical activity, yoga is not without risks. If facilitators and practitioners alike are educated on basic precautions, proper alignment, and correct sequencing of postures, the risks are small when compared with the potential benefits. This means that the yoga facilitator should spend time getting to know students before engaging them in a yoga practice. This might mean asking them to write down any medical concerns anonymously so that the teacher can provide

modifications during that pose while maintaining student privacy. It is crucial that the yoga facilitator be aware of any and all health concerns of the students he or she will be working with.

For most medical conditions, there are certain postures that should be avoided. These practices are termed *contraindicated* for that condition. It is important to remember that if something hurts, do not do it. If a pose becomes uncomfortable for any reason, come out of it. Yoga is meant to be accessible and pain-free. No posture should be forced.

Intended Setting and Audience

I developed this curriculum with two implementation methods in mind. The first is universal high school implementation for 30 minutes every other Friday. Each grade level (9, 10, 11, and 12) is asked to choose a class to designate 30 minutes every other Friday in order to implement this curriculum. My suggestion is that 9th grade teachers use Physical Science, 10th grade teachers use Health, 11th grade teachers use English, and 12th grade teachers use Social Studies. Adaptations and modifications have been included so that this curriculum is accessible to all students, assuming that teachers are able to use their discretion in providing alternative options. Advisory teachers or counselors could attend a short, intensive training to learn how to use the techniques described in this paper or independent experts on yoga instruction could come into the class when this curriculum is covered to teach in place of the usual teachers.

Secondly, I developed this curriculum for use in an intervention-type setting with smaller groups of adolescents that are at a higher risk than their peers for experiencing trauma. Trauma-sensitive modifications are included in this curriculum for this purpose.

Summary

Chapter 3 described the methods used to develop a curriculum in response to the question, “*How can high schools use yoga to foster social and emotional learning in students from all backgrounds?*” I used the Understanding by Design model (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) to backwards plan four units and numerous corresponding lesson plans with an emphasis on student understanding. The curriculum contains information gathered from chapter 2, the literature review, on the topic of yoga.

Chapter 4 describes the standards, unit plans, lesson plans, and other curricular materials in greater detail and includes a discussion about implementation, additional teacher considerations, and available modifications and adaptations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Curricular Design

Overview

Upon designing my curriculum as a way to answer the question, *“How can high schools use yoga to foster social and emotional learning in students from all backgrounds?”* I studied a number of social and emotional learning program reviews and tried to assimilate their results into my work. I decided to design four separate units based on CASEL’s five core competencies and designated one unit to each school year in a typical, four-year high school. The goal is to reach every student through universal implementation of this curriculum. This idea is based on current research findings that suggest that social and emotional learning is likely to “offer the greatest benefit to students when practiced and reinforced in a comprehensive way” rather than exclusively taught as problem-based interventions (Zheng & Hamedani, 2015). By organizing my curriculum in this way, I hope to move toward the mindset that attaining physical and mental health requires preventative measures and away from the mindset where prescriptions are given to treat symptoms only after they appear.

Furthermore, I decided to use class time to explicitly teach the lessons in my curriculum rather than having them taught during an advisory period. This is to ensure that social and emotional learning is front and center in our lesson objectives, not lost amidst the shuffle of helping students register for next year’s classes, preparing students

for standardized tests, and the dozens of other important advisory tasks that teachers need to complete. I also decided to use class time because I felt that it would help thoroughly integrate social and emotional learning with academics by affecting both *what* students learn as well as *how* they learn it. I thought that by choosing one class per grade level, i.e. Physical Science for 9th graders, Health for 10th graders, English for 11th graders, and Social Studies for 12th grade, I could provide an opportunity for teachers to work together to design collaborative, project-based lessons that foster social awareness and engagement and that are tailored to the student body they serve.

I intend for the teachers themselves to implement this curriculum separately from their course objectives once every other week. For example, every other Friday 30 minutes of class time will be designated for teaching one lesson from this curriculum. Ideally, students will use the social and emotional skills they learn frequently throughout the course, but at the same time it is important to remember to allow students to become proficient in their social and emotional skills first and *then* apply them as they relate to their coursework. Eventually, the goal is to integrate social and emotional skills across subjects and situations. My vision is that 9th and 10th graders will develop the initial self-awareness and self-management SEL skills from Units 1 and 2 and that 11th and 12th graders will do more extensive SEL integration through project-based learning in Units 3 and 4, which focus on social awareness and social management. This will enable them to practice collaboration and relationship skills in real-world settings and situations, learn more about their community and their responsibility to that community, and inspire students to develop their voice and take action for positive social change. This will require more work from participating teachers and administrators so that the curriculum

is aligned with the values of the student body and appropriate partnerships are made within the community.

Development of Social and Emotional Learning Standards

I began this capstone with the intention of designing a yoga-based curriculum to help students develop present-moment awareness, resiliency, and emotion regulation because I had just finished my own yoga teacher training and had learned about the multitude of positive benefits a yoga practice could provide. I soon realized that I was fulfilling many of the standards that social and emotional learning programs intend to support. I learned that Minnesota does not have SEL standards in place, and that currently there are only three states with comprehensive, stand-alone SEL standards for grades K-12: Kansas, Illinois, and West Virginia. So I adapted standards from Illinois and followed the guidelines set forth by CASEL to draft the standards I thought were most important to provide in Minnesota high schools. Then I fine-tuned my curriculum to meet those standards. I felt that providing a framework in the form of standards would lend credibility to my curriculum.

Created Social and Emotional Learning Standards for Minnesota High Schools

CASEL has identified five components of comprehensive SEL. They are 1) Self-Awareness; 2) Self-Management; 3) Social Awareness; 4) Relationship Skills; and 5) Responsible Decision-Making (CASEL, 2015). Because there are four grade levels in most Minnesota high schools, I chose to abbreviate these components into four elements so that students can focus on one area each year. They are 1) Self-Awareness; 2) Self-Management; 3) Social Awareness and 4) Social Management. I have created stand-alone

SEL standards for school-wide high school implementation using one element per grade level for approximately one trimester each school year, shown in Table 1.

Created Social and Emotional Learning Standards for Minnesota (Table 1)

| Grade | Goal | Connection to Yoga |
|-------|---|---|
| 9 | <p>Unit 1. Self-Awareness (“I am...”): Students are aware of what they are feeling in the present moment and have a realistic understanding of their own abilities as well as a sense of self-confidence (Elias et al., 1997). Students can recognize who they are and how they feel relative to the world around them.</p> <p>1A. Students demonstrate present-moment focus. 1B. Students demonstrate tolerance for experiencing positive and negative sensation. 1C. Students demonstrate awareness of their personal values and strengths and analyze how these personal qualities influence choices and successes. 1D. Students demonstrate awareness of their emotions. 1E. Students demonstrate a sense of personal ethical responsibility to themselves and their environment.</p> | Self-awareness is central to yoga. Yoga helps students gain awareness of movement, attention, and experience through studying pranayama, asana, and meditation. |
| 10 | <p>Unit 2. Self-Management (“I can...”) Students have the ability to regulate their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working towards achieving personal and academic goals even in the face of setbacks and frustrations (CASEL, 2015).</p> <p><i>Examples: developing impulse control, learning strategies for stress management, strengthening self-discipline, improving motivation, setting goals, practicing choice, and emotion regulation.</i></p> <p>2A. Students can identify their thoughts and emotions and analyze how positive and negative thoughts might affect decision-making and responsible behavior. 2B. Students can evaluate how expressing one’s emotions in different situations affects others (both positively and negatively). 2C. Students can generate ways to develop more positive thoughts, emotions, and attitudes. 2D. Students demonstrate the ability to regulate their emotions effectively by identifying and applying the skills required to improve emotion regulation. 2E. Students demonstrate self-regulation in the form of attention, self-control, and body control. 2F. Students can implement a plan to build on a personal strength, meet a need, or address a challenge. 2G. Students demonstrate honesty and integrity.</p> | Yoga allows students to employ the techniques they learned in Unit 1 when they are needed in order to manage emotions, attention, and actions. |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 11 | <p>Unit 3. Social Awareness (“I care...”) Students can understand and empathize with the perspectives of others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports (CASEL, 2015).</p> <p><i>Examples: active listening, practicing perspective taking, learning to express empathy, appreciating diversity, respecting others, acknowledging an ethical responsibility, and practicing responsible decision-making.</i></p> <p>3A. Students analyze similarities and differences between one’s own and others’ feelings and perspectives.</p> <p>3B. Students demonstrate empathy and understanding of those who hold different opinions.</p> <p>3C. Students can examine how the norms of different societies and cultures influence their members’ decisions and behaviors.</p> <p>3D. Students demonstrate an awareness of cultural issues and an appreciation for diversity and human dignity.</p> <p>3E. Students demonstrate consideration for others and a desire to positively contribute to their community.</p> | |
| 12 | <p>Unit 4. Social Management (“I will...”) Students can handle emotions in relationships effectively and establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals or groups based on cooperation, resistance to inappropriate social pressure, negotiating solutions to conflict, and seeking help when needed. Students are also able to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, and the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions on the well-being of self and others (CASEL 2015).</p> <p><i>Examples: learning effective communication techniques, peacefully resolving conflicts, and improving problem-solving skills.</i></p> <p>4A. Students can analyze how one’s behavior may affect others.</p> <p>4B. Students use positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.</p> <p>4C. Students can apply decision-making skills to establish responsible social and work relationships.</p> <p>4D. Students demonstrate the ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.</p> | |

Curriculum Design

This yoga intervention curriculum was created using the framework and guidelines found in *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The curriculum contains four separate units. The exercises vary in complexity, starting with the easiest exercises and ending with the most difficult.

The lessons within each unit are sequential in order to allow students to grow in their practice; however, the units themselves do not have to be taught in any particular order. These lessons can be used in a variety of situations with minimal modification. All lessons can be executed in about 30 minutes. This timeframe was chosen to support the current research that mindfulness is most effective if practiced in short segments multiple times throughout the day.

This curriculum is intended to run for approximately 4 weeks, as long as one lesson is taught at a time; however, it is highly recommended that teachers encourage students to use the skills they learn whenever they need them outside of class.

This curriculum is probably much different than any curriculum teachers have ever used. Traditionally, educators use a curriculum guide for academic subjects like math, social studies, science, or even psycho-educational topics such as violence prevention or social skills. This curriculum is not as concrete as those. This curriculum is designed to have a different impact on each student.

Lesson Design

The backwards design model used to create the overarching unit plan was scaled down and used in a similar way to design each individual lesson. The learning goals from the original unit plan were broken down into measurable learning objectives for each

lesson. The standard that each lesson meets is also included in each lesson inside parentheses following the objective. Key points were added to provide the teacher with an even better understanding on how to guide his or her students through each of the activities in the lesson. Next, an assessment for each lesson was determined in order to establish a goal for students to work toward in order to demonstrate mastery of each learning objective.

After determining each lesson's learning objective and corresponding assessment for mastery, components of the lesson were planned. Again, a backwards design model was used. Independent practice was created first to ensure that students had sufficient exposure to internalize the objectives of each lesson and be successful on the assessment. Guided practice was then determined so that students could transition from instruction to thinking about and working with the content on their own. Guided practice was planned in a way that allowed for gradual release of responsibility and a decreasing reliance on the teacher for help. The actual teaching of the content, called the introduction to new material, was intentionally planned last to avoid planning teacher-centered lessons. The focus should be on student learning. Opening and closing segments of each lesson were planned in order to provide connections between lessons and to provide connections to the overarching goal of the unit. This was done to provide congruency between lessons in case the content is not taught every single day. Finally, modifications are provided for each lesson to meet the needs of all students regardless of ability. When appropriate, potential implications are listed to alert the teacher in case they arise. I have designed each lesson with the following components in mind:

1. **Opening Mindful Moment:** An opening mindfulness exercise to help shift students' focus to the present moment.

2. **Introduction to New Material:** A short description of the background knowledge students need in order to be successful in mastering the achievement goal.
3. **Guided Experiential Practice:** Usually a script the facilitating teacher can use to guide students through an exercise.
4. **Sharing/Council:** This is a time for students to practice connecting with others in a respectful, meaningful way. This usually includes quotes to use as starting points.
5. **Independent Journaling Prompts:** These are prompts given to students to use in as they reflect on their experience. It is also intended to create coherence among each experience. A drawing prompt is always given as an alternative to writing.
6. **World Discovery:** In this section, the teacher guides the students through a discussion on how they can use what they've learned in the real world and why that would be important (Rechtschaffen, 2015).

Pacing

This curriculum is designed so that one lesson can be taught every two weeks, but this can be modified to once a day, once a week, or once a month. I suggest using one unit per grade level, with 9th graders using Unit 1: Self-Awareness, 10th graders using Unit 2: Self-Management, 11th graders using Unit 3: Social Awareness, and 12th graders using Unit 4: Social Management.

Unit Plans

Each unit plan is presented in a table below. Unit plans include *Desired Results* (achievement goals, understandings, and essential questions), *Assessment of Evidence* (performance tasks and other formative assessments), and a *Learning Plan*, which is an overview of the lessons included in each unit.

Unit 1: Self-Awareness (Table 2).

| Stage 1: Desired Results | Stage 2: Assessment of Evidence | Stage 3: Learning Plan |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Established Achievement Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To pay attention more fully to the present moment in order to focus the mind in constructive ways instead of feeling overwhelmed or out of control as a result of internal or external stimuli. To increase perception, awareness, and understanding. To separate thoughts from emotions and physical sensations and increase tolerance for both positive and negative sensation. To become aware of personal values and strengths and analyze how these personal qualities influence choices and outcomes. To become aware of emotions. To demonstrate a sense of personal ethical responsibility to oneself and one's environment. <p>Understandings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Self-Awareness</i> means knowing what we are feeling in the moment and having a realistic assessment of our own abilities and a well-grounded sense of self-confidence, as well as recognizing who we are and how we feel relative to the world around us. Mindfulness, also known as meditation, is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment by moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). This can help you better control and soothe overwhelming emotions. Mindfulness will help you learn to identify and separate judgmental thoughts from your experiences. These judgmental thoughts often fuel overwhelming emotions. When thoughts occur in meditation, we have the opportunity to explore in exquisite detail how our thinking mind works, to learn which kind of thoughts have a lot of “grab” in our minds and how it is that we get hooked by them. The cultivation of character is central to the practice of yoga. Both the yamas and niyamas, the first two limbs of yoga, are dedicated to the question of character. The five niyamas are personal virtues that regulate our relationship to our inner world (self-awareness). <p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate present-moment focus | <p>Performance Tasks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in a calming meditation practice to increase awareness. Use the breath to increase present-moment focus. Apply personal values and strengths to activities in daily life. Separate thoughts from emotions in order to make positive choices. Reflect on meditation experiences through journaling. <p>Essential Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What was your experience in trying to bring your attention back to the breath after the mind had wandered? How could becoming more embodied help you? When you are totally still what movements do you notice in your body? Are there activities you might alter in such a way as to cultivate your signature values? Others you might take up? How do your thoughts change as a result of experiencing this emotion? How do your behaviors change? | <p>Suggested Lesson Sequence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Developing Awareness of Breath Sensation Awareness Exploring Breaths What Do You Stand For? Determining Your Signature Values Monkey Mind – Learning to Observe Thoughts Recognizing and Describing Emotions |

Unit 2: Self-Management (Table 3).

| Stage 1: Desired Results | Stage 2: Assessment of Evidence | Stage 3: Learning Plan |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Established Achievement Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will develop tools to help them stay present during emotional disturbances 2. Students will create an initial awakening of awareness and energy throughout the body and mind. 3. Students will strengthen the connection between body and mind. <p>Understandings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The five niyamas are personal virtues that regulate our relationship to our inner world. • Developing an awareness of moment-to-moment experiences will help students learn how to focus on one thing at a time, and in doing this, students can better control themselves. • Working with the breath is the most universally agreed upon method for emotion regulation because it is the simplest, quickest, and most accessible strategy. <p><i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify their thoughts and emotions and analyze how positive and negative thoughts might affect decision-making and responsible behavior. • Evaluate how expressing one's emotions in different situations affects others (both positively and negatively). • Generate ways to develop more positive thoughts, emotions, and attitudes. • Demonstrate the ability to regulate their emotions effectively by identifying and applying the skills required to improve emotion regulation. • Demonstrate self-regulation in the form of attention, self-control, and body control. • Implement a plan to build on a personal strength, meet a need, or address a challenge. • Demonstrate honesty and integrity. • Use effective decision-making skills. • Set and achieve goals while overcoming obstacles. | <p>Performance Tasks</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify intentions behind actions. 2. Withdraw attention from sensory stimulation in order to tune in to present-moment awareness (pratyahara). 3. Coordinate simple body movements with the breath. 4. Evaluate outcomes of actions, including the expression of various thoughts and emotions in various situations. <p>Essential Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does pratyahara change the way your mind produces thoughts? How does it change the way your body feels? | <p>Lesson Sequence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where Your Attention Goes, Your Intention Goes: The Power of Setting Intentions 2. Pratyahara – A Palming Exercise 3. Mindful Breathing 4. Mindful Movement 5. Connecting Movement with Breath 6. Judgments vs. the Present Moment 7. The Well – Asking the Three Most Important Questions <p>Other Lesson Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding Flow • Questioning Change • Thought Defusion • Emotion Defusion <p>Additional Breathing Techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchor Breath • Bhamari (Humming) Breath • Ujjayi Breath • Belly Breathing • Alternate Nostril Breathing • Crocodile Breathing |

Unit 3: Social Awareness (Table 4).

| Stage 1: Desired Results | Stage 2: Assessment of Evidence | Stage 3: Learning Plan |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Established Achievement Goals</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Students will be able to understand their own perspective on important issues as well as understand and empathize with the perspectives of others. Students will have an awareness of how social categories shape daily life experiences across various contexts and analyze those experiences through multicultural lenses. Students will have an awareness of systems of privilege, power, and oppression. <p>Understandings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Sanskrit, <i>yama</i> means “restraint”, and the five yamas are ethical observances that regulate our relationship to the world around us. Gratitude practice cultivates happiness and a positive mindset. Compassion for self and others is built by focusing on gratitude. <p><i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze similarities and differences between one’s own and others’ feelings and perspectives. Demonstrate empathy and understanding of those who hold different opinions. Examine how the norms of different societies and cultures influence their members’ decisions and behaviors. Demonstrate an awareness of cultural issues and an appreciation for diversity and human dignity. Demonstrate consideration for others and a desire to positively contribute to their community. | <p>Performance tasks for this unit are largely up to the teacher. It is suggested that the tasks require students to consider multiple perspectives across a variety of social contexts.</p> <p>Performance Tasks</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Students will continue to reflect on their personal experiences while taking action to broaden their relationship connections. <p>Essential Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What aspects of yourself are you grateful for? What aspects of your environment are you grateful for? | <p>Lesson Sequence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Generating Gratitude <p>Other Lesson Ideas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing Needs Behind Actions Recognizing Shared, Common Humanity |

Unit 4: Social Management (Table 5).

| Stage 1: Desired Results | Stage 2: Assessment of Evidence | Stage 3: Learning Plan |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Established Achievement Goal In this unit, students will engage in collaborative, project-based learning experiences within their community to practice social and emotional skills in meaningful, real-world situations.</p> <p>Understandings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Sanskrit, <i>yama</i> means “restraint”, and the five yamas are ethical observances that regulate our relationship to the world around us. <p><i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze how one’s behavior may affect others. Use positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others. Apply decision-making skills to establish responsible social and work relationships. Demonstrate the ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways. <p>Essential Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How could you change your precipitating or secondary thoughts and behaviors to avoid confrontation that could damage a relationship? How could you teach other people mindfulness? | <p>Performance tasks for this unit are largely up to the teacher. It is suggested that tasks require students to actively integrate social and emotional learning with academics through relevant content within the community.</p> <p>Basic Performance Tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate mindfully using “I” statements. Identify new responses to use when feeling overwhelmed. <p>Advanced Performance Tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will apply what they’ve learned in meaningful ways while engaging in relevant, community-based partnerships and projects that allow them to have real world interactions within their community. Students will reflect on how their learning experiences depend on collaboration and social interaction, as well as how they contribute to the well-being of the school and community. Students will demonstrate the leadership skills necessary to organize for social action. Students will stand up against injustice and work for positive change in their own lives and in the lives of others. | <p>It is recommended that instructional practices continue to foster personal reflection through journaling and group discussion.</p> <p>Lesson Sequence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Creating Opposite Action: Doing the Opposite of Your Emotional Urges Mindful Communication Problem Solving Using Behavior Analysis |

Lesson Plans & Common Themes

Each unit builds on the previous one in order to further develop students' self-regulatory skills and executive functioning skills, as these are the driving forces behind any kind of social and emotional learning.

The lessons in this curriculum all seek to address the following goals: creating present-moment focus; developing mindfulness skills; developing tolerance for experiencing sensation; building curiosity; centering; grounding; building self-regulatory skills; practicing choice; integrating aspects of experience; increasing self-confidence; and building connections to others. Lessons are included in detail in Appendix A.

Effective Teaching

In order to effectively implement this curriculum, I suggest that the teacher be licensed and fully capable of executing the theories of best practice in teaching. This includes but is not limited to the following: frequent, informal checks for understanding, the creation of posters, PowerPoint presentations, and/or other visual aids, the establishment of efficient procedures for the organization of all student materials relevant to the unit including notebooks and self-reflection logs, and, finally, the ability to adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of the student population, especially those of English language learners and students with special needs. Again, I have provided suggestions for modifications and potential implications, but it is ultimately up to the teacher to ensure that all students are reached effectively.

If licensed yoga instructors are not brought into the classroom to teach these lessons, I recommend that each teacher or counselor using this curriculum attend a two-day intensive training on teaching yoga at the beginning of the school year or over the

summer. This would ideally cover basic yoga philosophy, correct asana posture for the postures used in this curriculum, and how to safely provide various adaptations that students may need.

Additional Considerations

It might be helpful for the facilitator to have a personal yoga practice to provide him or her with a firsthand experience of the internal states that students will experience. A personal practice will also help develop an understanding of some of the anxieties that new yoga practitioners may face.

Often, these lessons contain scripted exercises. The scripts have been written by highly qualified yoga instructors and thoroughly tested on students in yoga classes. I recommend that the facilitator stick to the script provided with as little deviation as possible, although making some changes to the language might be helpful so that it feels more natural.

I also suggest that the facilitator read the scripts first before presenting them to students. It would be even better if the facilitator practiced them on their own. Another good option might be trying the exercises with a colleague, family member, or friend. Practice is important in order to feel comfortable with the content.

The facilitator will need to develop his or her own voice, which includes finding a comfortable speaking pace and vocal quality that is soft and gentle, but clear. There are places within each script where it might feel natural to pause and let the weight of your words sink in. I highly encourage facilitators to treat each period in the script as a chance for them to pause and take a deep breath. There is no rush to get through the scripts and students will benefit from a slow, calm, peaceful delivery of each exercise.

I also recommend that the facilitator engage in a majority of each exercise. This will help provide a model for students to reference when they are unsure of what to do. It also allows the yoga practice to become a shared experience. The facilitator should try to stay with the students mentally in order to gently guide students in how they are approaching the exercise, if necessary.

While these exercises themselves are only intended to take between 10 to 15 minutes, more time should be taken to debrief the experience if needed. Many yoga practices can trigger vivid emotions and/or memories, and the facilitator should be available, accessible, and willing to listen and respond to anything that might arise in the students.

Finally, it is important that the facilitator have a strong sense of student abilities. The facilitator must feel confident in modifying or excluding parts of an exercise if a student is not developmentally ready for it. This curriculum is not intended for students with special needs, nor is it intended for students with severe mental disorders.

Summary

I have developed social and emotional learning standards as well as a yoga-based curriculum to meet said standards. The standards are broken down into four categories: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Social Management. The created curriculum corresponds to the standards and includes four unit plans and several sample lesson plans and scripts for each unit. The standards and the unit plans were presented here in chapter four, but the lesson plans themselves are provided in Appendix A. Lessons were structured using a backwards design model that mirrored the original structure of the units (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). In designing this curriculum, I

encountered many unexpected setbacks, complications, questions, and ideas for future work. This is all discussed in Chapter 5, Conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

Overview

This chapter will summarize the process I went through in answering the question, “*How can high schools use yoga to foster social and emotional learning in students from all backgrounds?*” I will begin by discussing the things I have learned throughout this capstone process. I will then move into a discussion on possible implications and limitations of this curriculum and what that might mean during its implementation. I will then talk about my personal plan for using this curriculum in the future and identify what is needed to make it happen. I will also discuss the potential for using this curriculum at a district level. Finally, I will make suggestions for future research on the impact of yoga in the public school systems.

Review of Curriculum

In order to answer the question, “*How can high schools use yoga to foster social and emotional learning in students from all backgrounds?*” I presented a review of current literature that is relevant to my topic. I began by investigating the foundations of yoga, including yoga philosophy and important aspects of a yoga practice. The eight limbs of yoga, defined by Patanjali, are practiced in order to learn how “to create a state in which we are always present – really present – in every action, in every moment” (Desikachar, 1995). To be *truly present* in every moment is yoga’s main goal, and the

first step to getting there is developing the ability to pay attention to one thing while eliminating all other distractions. In fact, yoga can be defined as a method to unify the mind or “to tie the strands of the mind together” (Desikachar, 1995). The ability to sustain attention allows the practitioner to selectively engage their attentional capacities in various situations, leading to greater self-regulation. Living in this way allows practitioners of yoga to live lives that are meaningful, thoughtful, and intentional while reducing pain and suffering and illuminating truth and understanding.

In order to use yoga in a public school setting, more evidence was needed to show that the benefits of yoga are firmly grounded in science. I also needed to show that schools have a responsibility to educate the whole student.

Four unit plans were designed using the Understanding by Design framework (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Each

Reflections on Learning

In completing this capstone, I have learned a great deal about my values as an educator, the potential that exists for yoga teachers to positively impact youth, the importance of integrating social and emotional learning into high schools, and the fate that awaits us if we do not make changes soon.

I have grown immensely as an educator throughout the two-year process of writing this capstone. I have been able to sit down and reflect on how each of my unique teaching experiences from the past several years has come together to shape my current understanding of what it means to be a 21st century teacher. Current global conditions demand systemic educational reform. Schools must be responsible for educating the whole student, including their cognitive, emotional, social, and ethical development.

Emerging scientific research has shown that brain functions performed in the prefrontal cortex (PFC) such as attentional and cognitive control, planning, and working memory are involved in both social-emotional competence and academic achievement (Blair & Razza, 2007). New strategies that promote attentional control and executive functioning skills will be particularly important to identify and to incorporate into the K-12 curriculum today. Current SEL programs have already been shown to prevent substance abuse, violence, and mental health problems while promoting positive youth development including meaningful improvements on achievement test performance (Durlak et al., 2011).

Possible Implications

SEL programs including yoga have numerous positive implications for teachers and administrators as well as for the students they intend to serve. In order to support students' social and emotional learning, teachers must be proficient in their own social and emotional learning skills. This provides an opportunity for teachers to grow by participating in professional development experiences and collaborating with colleagues and administrators. The development of these skills in teachers may also support their ability to create cooperative and caring classrooms. Of course, structuring, scheduling, and funding these opportunities for staff is the real challenge; however, I think the benefits will far outweigh the costs. In one study, mindfulness training reduced self-reported emotional, behavioral, and gastronomic stress symptoms among a sample of secondary school teachers (Winzelberg & Luskin, 1999).

Despite the benefits, there are also legitimate concerns regarding the use of a yoga-based curriculum in public school settings and whether the curriculum can remain

completely secular. It is important that any curriculum used for any subject in a public school setting be thoroughly secular, culturally sensitive, developmentally appropriate, and evidence-based (Burke, 2009). The development of any curriculum that adapts exercises from contemplative traditions must also be open to careful scientific scrutiny to ensure that we do no harm in this area of education (Birdee et al., 2009). Further research is needed to better understand how SEL can be most effectively taught to students from different backgrounds.

I am concerned that teachers and/or administrators with non-secular beliefs might reject a yoga-based SEL curriculum because they feel that it conflicts with their personal belief system. I am also concerned that religious teachers and/or administrators might accidentally or purposely infuse this curriculum with their beliefs, rendering it non-secular and unusable in a public school setting. It is important to emphasize that yoga, in the context of this curriculum, is not intended to be affiliated with any type of religious faith or practice, but rather that it is a series of exercises and lessons meant to enhance students' perception of themselves and the world around them.

Limitations of the Curriculum

The biggest limitation of this curriculum is that the practices of yoga are more closely aligned with the first two units than the last two. The first two units, Self-Awareness and Self-Management, can be neatly organized with traditional yoga techniques such as asana practice, meditation, and pranayama. These exercises are all self-centered, even when the focus is external. Meditating on compassion, kindness, or forgiveness, for example, requires nothing more than oneself. A very sophisticated understanding of yoga is required to execute units three and four. It can certainly be done,

but the practices are not generally aligned with how most people picture yoga. Both the yamas and niyamas deal with our social attitude and lifestyle, how we interact with other people and the environment, and how we deal with our problems. These all form a part of yoga, but they cannot be practiced. What we can practice are asana, meditation, and pranayama, which make us aware of where we are, where we stand, and how we look at things.

This curriculum needs to be implemented in a way that is tailored to the student community it serves. This places a great deal of responsibility on the cooperating teachers to collaborate and plan project-based learning experiences for their students within the surrounding community.

Plan for Implementation

The writing of this curriculum has allowed me to collaborate with the counselors at my school. Recently, there has been a big push for mindfulness instruction. This is reflected in our Healthy Student Partnership with Allina and with current school-wide initiatives to get counselors into the classrooms every so often to do a guided meditation or breathing exercise with students. The counselors have only come to our class twice, and so far, my students have been thrilled. On both occasions, they participated eagerly and readily engaged in a discussion afterwards in which many students stated they wanted to do this again in the future.

My most recent meeting with our counselors and Healthy Student Partnership representatives was promising. I presented my curriculum ideas and we hope to work together over the summer to create a plan for implementation in the 2016-17 school year. The plan would test our ideas using pioneer classes and teacher volunteers to teach the

curriculum I've put together. Our partnership with Allina will provide funding for teacher training at the beginning of the year. If all goes well, the pioneer classes would serve as a starting point for universal school implementation moving forward.

Suggestions for Future Research

When I first started drafting this paper, I wanted to do action-based research to determine whether the physical asana practice alone was enough to induce the well-documented effects of yoga or whether the contemplative practices were necessary as well. Is a physical practice alone enough to induce the positive benefits of yoga? In the West, we seem to embrace only the workout aspect of a yoga practice. What are the conclusive benefits of the physical practice alone versus the breathing and meditation practices alone? I would love to see more research done on the component parts of yoga so that we can extract the essential practices in order to be more efficient in what we have our students spend their time learning.

Once the most important parts of yoga are determined, i.e. the proportion of physical exercise to seated contemplative meditation, I would like to understand the most effective way to implement those different pieces. What is the perfect combination of dosage and frequency of yoga programs in the schools? Should students practice every day, once a week, or once a month? Is there a time of day that is most effective?

I would also like to apply these questions to the developmental timeframe of adolescence. Are there "windows of opportunity" in social and emotional development? If so, how can we best support students during those critical times and what are the exercises that are most developmentally appropriate for them?

I would also suggest that future researchers measure curriculum effectiveness using the Feel Bad Scale, Global Self-Worth Subscale, Healthy Self-Regulation Subscale, Test Battery of Cognition Function Tests, MBSR, and the RAT as these are all tests I considered using in my capstone.

Finally, I think that yoga has the potential to dramatically improve the creativity of students. This would benefit science, engineering, art, and music classes. One question that might be asked is whether yoga has the capacity to improve problem-solving abilities by enhancing insight, intuition, epiphany, and creativity.

Final Reflections

My goal in writing this capstone is to provide high schools with a way to develop young people as whole human beings that are socially and emotionally aware, who engage a growth mindset that enables them to persevere when challenged, who learn to be mindful, conscientious, and empowered, and who develop a sense of social responsibility about making positive contributions to their school community, to themselves, and to the world beyond. In a very real way, our world depends on the truly transformational and impactful teachers that students of the 21st century need are those who are willing to address the social, emotional, and academic aspects of learning.

APPENDIX A**Lesson Plans**

Lesson 1: Developing Awareness of Breath

Learning Objectives: SWBAT demonstrate present-moment focus by paying attention to the physical sensations created by the breath in the body. (1.A)

Key Points:

- Attention can be trained by focusing on the sensations created by the breath in the body.
- Once learned in meditation, the focusing of attention can be deployed in daily life.
- Working with the breath is the most universally agreed upon method for emotion regulation because it is the simplest, quickest, and often most accessible strategy.
- Every contemplative practice requires the development of attention.
- Mindfulness of breathing not only trains attention, but also strengthens the neural pathway that remembers to focus on the breath, making this strategy more available when we're feeling out of control.

Assessment: Answers to independent journaling prompts will serve as the formal assessment. Informal assessment should be done through question prompts provided throughout the lesson plan as well as observation during guided experiential practice.

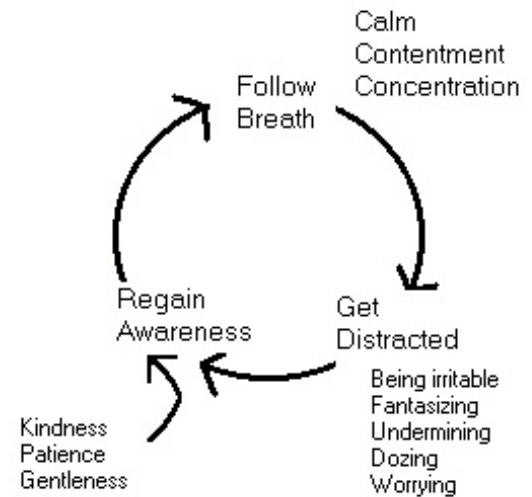
Connection to the Achievement Goal: Mindfulness of breathing introduces students to the art of paying attention. They are learning to tune in to their own bodies and minds in order to understand their current state. They are given a tool – the breath – that is always accessible to them should they need to regain self-control, for the breath creates a bridge between the body and the mind. Eventually, students will be able to curb negative or unhealthy emotions as soon as they recognize them by utilizing their breath as a means to stay present and make healthy and productive choices.

Materials and Preparation: Students will need their journals, writing utensils, yoga mats, and possibly yoga blocks. Students should be seated on their yoga mats in a circle to promote a sense of community. They should be sitting cross-legged on their mat, using a yoga block for support if they need it, and if that is still inaccessible, they may be seated on a chair.

Opening Mindful Moment: Ask students to freeze their bodies. Tell them to take an inventory of their breathing without modifying body posture or breathing pattern and without judgment. Ask them the following questions: Is your breath deep or shallow? Long or short? Are you breathing through your mouth or your nostrils? Where do you feel your breath most prominently? Maybe you feel it in your nostrils or in your throat. Give students sixty seconds to observe the sensations of the breath. [2-3 minutes]

Introduction to New Material: The focus of this lesson is to learn how to use the breath as a tool to tap into present moment awareness.

- Show students this image. Ask them what this image might mean for someone who is trying to meditate.
- Tell students that the *object* they are using to train their attention is their breath. This is because the breath tends to be an emotionally neutral object for most people. The breath also provides a bridge between several pairs of opposites: the mind and body; voluntary and involuntary body functions; and the two branches of the autonomic nervous system, the sympathetic (fight or flight) and parasympathetic (rest and digest).
- Tell students that they are going to practice using their breath to become more present because the breath creates physical sensations in the body that can be used as a point of focus. It's always accessible (as long as you're alive), and it creates a bridge between the mind and the body. If we can slow our breath down, we can lower our stress response and slow our mental processes. This is a good tool to use whenever you're anxious, mad, or feeling out of control.
- Tell students that when they first try to meditate, it's ok if their minds wander. In fact, the single biggest obstacle to meditation is the mistaken belief that mind wandering is a problem that needs to be fixed. Mind wandering is *not* a problem that needs to be changed. Our minds think. That is their job. Attention is trained by bringing awareness back to the breath whenever you become aware that the mind has wandered off. Each time the mind wanders, a new opportunity to train attention presents itself. Getting distracted is not an obstacle, but actually what allows us to strengthen the muscle of attention. [4-5 minutes]



Guided Experiential Practice: Allow students to find a comfortable seated position on the floor. They may also lie down if that is more comfortable. Read the following script to students:

“Find a posture that allows you to be both relaxed and alert, yet neither stiff nor rigid. Straighten your spine a little bit and gently roll your shoulders back and down, opening the chest and relaxing the belly. The intention of this practice is to combine alertness, relaxation, and stillness – qualities that aren’t typically combined in everyday life. This is a new “gear” for most people, who are accustomed to being either “on” or “off”. The position of the body supports the ability of the mind to settle down and sustain nonjudgmental awareness.

“Allow the hands to rest comfortable, either in your lap or on your thighs, and allow the eyes to gently close. Should this feel uncomfortable for any reason, maintain a soft focus on the floor in front of you. If you like, place one hand on your stomach. Feel your stomach rise and fall as you breathe in through your nose and out through your

mouth. Imagine your belly filling up with air like a balloon as you breathe in, and then feel it deflate as you breathe out. As you breathe, notice the sensations in your body. Feel the breath moving in across your nostrils and blowing out across your lips. Feel your lungs fill up with air. Notice the weight of your body resting on whatever you're sitting on. With each breath, notice how your body feels more and more relaxed.

"Now, as you continue to breathe, begin counting your breaths each time you exhale. You can count either silently to yourself or aloud. Count each exhalation until you reach '4' and then begin counting at '1' again. To begin, breathe in slowly through your nose, and then exhale slowly through your mouth. Count '1'. Again, breathe in slowly through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Count '2'. Repeat, breathing in slowly through your nose, and then slowly exhale. Count '3'. Last time – breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Count '4'. Now begin counting at '1' again.

"This time, though, as you continue to count, occasionally shift your focus to how you're breathing. Notice the rising and falling of your chest and stomach as you inhale and exhale. Again, feel the breath moving in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Continue counting as you take slow, long breaths. Feel your stomach expand like a balloon as you breathe in, and then feel it deflate as you breathe out. Continue to shift your focus back and forth between counting and the physical experience of breathing.

Now, lastly, begin to notice any thoughts or other distractions that remove your focus from your breathing. These distractions might be memories, sounds, physical sensations, or emotions. When your mind begins to wander and you catch yourself thinking of something else, return your focus to counting your breath. Or return your focus to the physical sensation of breathing. Try not to criticize yourself for getting distracted. Just keep taking slow, long breaths into your belly, in and out. Imagine filling up your belly with air like a balloon. Feel it rising with each inhalation and falling with each exhalation. Keep counting each breath, and with each exhalation, feel your body relaxing, more and more deeply.

Once you have completed the script, allow students to finish their meditation in silence for another two minutes, and then tell students to gently open their eyes and sit up if they were on their backs. (Cullen, 2015, 42)

Sharing: Ask the following questions to the group, and allow them to share their answers and engage in a conversation: How did that feel? What were they paying attention to? What was easy, and what was hard?

Read the following quote to students and ask students what they think it means and how it relates to the experience they just had. Facilitate a discussion. [3-5 minutes]

"While meditating, we are simply seeing what the mind has been doing all along." –Allan Lokos

Independent Journaling Prompts: Independently, allow students to reflect on the following questions by answering them in their journals:

- Did you notice any change in your body or mind after practicing breath awareness for a couple minutes?

- Did the mind stay focused on the breath the whole time, or did it wander off to fantasies, memories, plans, images, or other mental contents?
- What was your experience in trying to bring your attention back to the breath after the mind had wandered? [5-8 minutes]

World Discovery: Tell students that once they are comfortable with this type of contemplative meditation, they should practice it every day even if it is only for a few minutes. With this type of regular practice, they are strengthening the neural pattern in their brain that remembers what it feels like to concentrate on the breath. Eventually, it will become easier and easier to use this technique during challenging situations in order to regain control. Ask students to think of a time in their typical daily routine when they could add 5 minutes of meditation on their breath. Tell them to give it a try, and see how they feel after doing this exercise for a week.

Closing Mindful Moment: Tell students not to be discouraged if their minds wandered the entire time. Researchers have estimated that our minds produce between 12,000 and 70,000 thoughts a day. It's not *your* mind, it's just the nature of mind. Noticing the breath, noticing the mind wandering, and gently bringing the mind back are all equally important components of training attention.

Lesson 2: Sensation Awareness

Learning Objective: SWBAT demonstrate tolerance for experiencing positive and negative sensation. (1.B)

Key Points:

- The physical experience can be used to build attention in the present moment.
- Acceptance of and tolerance for experiencing pleasant and unpleasant sensations happens through the cultivation of equanimity and kindness to self.

Assessment: Answers to independent journaling prompts will serve as the formal assessment. Informal assessment should be done through question prompts provided throughout the lesson plan as well as observation during guided experiential practice.

Materials and Preparation: This lesson can be done indoors or outdoors. It is ideal for students to be sitting in chairs or on the floor. The important thing is that students are in a space that feels safe and enjoyable with minimal distractions.

Opening Mindful Moment

Sample Script – Sensation Exploration

“Let’s say you were going to another country – maybe India, China, or Mexico. You would need to learn the language and the customs to get around. Today we are going to take a journey of awareness in the country of our bodies. To get around, we need to learn the language of sensations and feelings. When we learn the language of our bodies then we can relax more easily, we can have more control over our reactions, and we can build our body skills for anything we do. When we are more aware of our bodies, we will be better at sports, dancing, skateboarding, playing guitar, and anything else we use our bodies for.”

“To learn the language of our bodies, let’s begin by raising one hand and then letting our eyes close. Since you cannot see your hand, how do you even know it is there? What sensations do you experience in your hand now? Let’s create some more sensations so that we can feel all the various sensations that a hand can feel.”

“First, stretch out your hand by spreading your fingers as wide as possible. What was that like?”

“Now clench your fist and bring your fingers as close together as possible.”

“Relax. Now move your thumb over each finger.”

“Now try touching your chair, your clothes, or other textures. With each different movement, notice which sensations are there. Is there heat or cold, heaviness or lightness, pain or pleasure? There are so many different things one hand can feel” (Rechtschaffen, 2014).

Introduction to New Material: The body scan is an important technique because it fosters awareness of what is going on within the body on a moment-to-moment basis, and it gives the mind a break from the nearly constant thinking, judging, and other processes that occur solely within the head.

Some people find the body scan to be very relaxing, and it's quite common to fall asleep. Keep in mind that this is an awareness practice in which we're training the mind to pay close attention to present-moment experience in a nonjudgmental way.

Guided Experiential Practice

Sample Script: Body Scan

"Find a comfortable position on your back. Get all of your wiggles out now, make any adjustments you need to make, and eventually find stillness. No physical movement. Your body should remain motionless throughout this experience, as much as you can. As you exhale, let go of all your cares and worries. Let go physically, let go mentally, let go emotionally. Empty the mind like you're emptying water out of a bucket.

"Begin by bringing attention to your left toes. Notice any sensations that exist in your toes. It's so common to take the toes for granted, not even noticing that they're there unless they hurt. Draw attention to however they feel right now, in this present moment, without judging or trying to change anything. If you do notice that the sensations in your toes change, be aware of that change without trying to control it.

"Now, shifting attention to the top of your left foot, bring awareness to however it feels right now, drawing attention to any sensations that arise, such as the feeling of your skin against your socks, or sensations of temperature, pressure, tension, tingling, itching, and so on.

Each time you find the mind wandering from the body part you're focusing on, acknowledge that it has wandered and gently return the attention to the body. When you do this, don't give yourself a hard time or get angry with yourself for not focusing; simply return the mind to the body in a nonjudgmental way as you continue with the body scan.

"Slowly progress in this way throughout the body, going up the left leg to the pelvis and then up the right leg, beginning with the right toes. Then shift attention to various parts of the torso, abdomen, lower back, upper back, chest, and shoulders. Go down each arm to the fingertips, and then move up the neck and throat to all areas of the face. Conclude with the back and then the top of the head.

"As you go through the body, there's no need to make anything special happen. Most of what you notice will be quite ordinary: pressure, contact, warmth, coolness, stiffness, heaviness, lightness, and so on. If a part of the body has no sensation, just notice this, perhaps using a mental label like 'numb' or 'blank'. If there's pain or other strong sensations in other parts of the body, acknowledge the experience and gently escort your attention back to the part of the body that is the focus of the body scan.

"Allow your attention to linger at the top of the head, and then expand your sphere of awareness to include your breathing. Imagine yourself breathing throughout your entire body, beginning at the top of your head and extending all the way to your fingers and toes. As you breathe in, allow the air to fill your body. As you breathe out, allow the air to exit from your entire body.

"Invite yourself to remain in this state of stillness for a few moments.

"As you're ready, return awareness to the entire body, beginning to move your feet and hands. You might then want to move your arms and legs, stretch, or rock from side to side on your back.

"Gently open your eyes and return your awareness to the room. (Cullen, 2015).

Sharing: Once the body scan experience has ended, guide a discussion on the importance of becoming aware of the body. Share this quote by Jim Rohn:

“Take care of your body. It’s the only place you have to live.” –Jim Rohn

You can use this quote or any other one that reflects on the miraculous experience of having a human body. Another quote you might use is,

“’Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens to which our wills are gardeners.” –William Shakespeare, *Othello*

Independent Journaling Prompts: Independently, allow students to reflect on the following questions by answering them in their journals:

- Drawing: Draw a picture of your favorite part of this exercise.
- Writing: List all the sensations you feel in your body.
- In what ways do your hands feel different than your feet?
- How could becoming more embodied help you?

World Discovery

“Some people say they are so embodied that they can feel atmospheric changes in their bodies so that they know when it is going to rain. As you walk out of the classroom see if you can continue to notice the sensations in your body. Notice what it feels like when you walk outside, when you play a game, when you take a shower, and when you lie down to sleep.

“Many people report that doing the body scan before they go to bed helps them relax and fall asleep. Try your body scan when you’re going to sleep and when you wake up in the morning. See what you find” (Rechtschaffen, 2014).

Additional Teacher Resources and Considerations: It is important to stay cognizant of the possibility of eliciting strong emotional responses by opening a student’s awareness to sensations that may feel scary or uncomfortable. If a child has a difficult emotional experience, maintain a caring and attentive presence and support the student in recognizing where they are by grounding and reorienting them to the sensory world around them. In other words, help them remember they are here and now, not there and then.

Lesson 3: Exploring Breaths

Learning Objective:

- SWBAT demonstrate present-moment focus. (1.A)

Key Points:

1. These practices help cultivate attention by focusing awareness on connecting the breath with body movements.
2. The movements support the students in experiencing connection and aliveness in their bodies while also enhancing their capacity to relax and be centered.
3. Through progressive practice students learn to go from fun, external movements to internal stillness.

Assessment: Answers to independent journaling prompts will serve as the formal assessment. Informal assessment should be done through question prompts provided throughout the lesson plan as well as observation during guided experiential practice.

Materials and Preparation: It is important to make sure there is enough room for big movements where students can swing their arms without hitting each other. Ideally, students are standing for the activities in this lesson but the movements can still be done sitting in chairs or on the floor.

Opening Mindful Moment: Ask for a volunteer (optional). This volunteer will be the breath monitor and should come up to the front of the room where all students can clearly see. Hand the breath monitor a slinky. The breath monitor is in charge of monitoring the group's breathing rate by expanding and contracting the slinky. The breath monitor should follow his or her own breathing rate, and the rest of the room can adjust to follow it. The goal is to have everyone breathing slowly and deeply at a steady pace. Allow students to breathe like this for approximately 10-15 breaths.

Introduction to New Material: Just as the activities of the mind can influence the breath, the breath can also influence our state of mind. The breath is a link between the mind and the body. Learning how to control your breathing is called *pranayama* in yoga. Pranayama means conscious breathing. We can breath consciously using lots of different breathing patterns that emphasize the inhalation, exhalation, or holding the breath.

There are four parts to a full breath: the inhalation, the retention after that, the exhalation, and the retention after that. We can work on our breathing in two basic ways – we can work on making all parts of the breathing cycle equal, or we can alter various phases. Today, we will be working on a little bit of both.

Guided Experiential Practice & Sharing

Sample Script: Spider-Man Breath

“Has anyone ever done the Spider-Man breath? No? Everyone breathe in and pull your hands in toward your chest and when you breathe out let your arms shoot out like Spider-Man shooting his webs. Let’s do that a few times.”

“Now let’s do the dolphin breath. Every time you breathe in, curve your arms up like a dolphin jumping out of the water and then bring your arms down as you breathe out. Let’s do that a few times.

“Now let’s do the crocodile breath. Every time you breathe in, open your arms like the jaws of a crocodile and every time you breathe out let them drop. Let’s do that a few times as well.

“Now we can do a few butterfly breaths, where you let your wings open on the inhale and close on the exhale.

“Now let’s lift our shoulders up really tight when we breathe in and then as you breathe out let them fall and totally relax. Let’s do that a few times.

“This time let’s be totally still without moving a muscle. When you breathe in and out, see if anything moves. Even though you’re trying to be totally still, see if there is any movement. Did you notice anything?” (Rechtschaffen, 2014).

Having gone from big, exaggerated movements to awareness of subtle movements within a still body, you can ask students, “What movements do you notice in your body when you are trying to be totally still?” You can follow up by asking, “How does your body feel after doing mindful movements?”

Then read the following *Breath Expansion* script, which is an exercise on finding equanimity of the breath.

“Lying in savasana on the floor with an elongated spine, relax the body and begin to observe your breath. Place your left hand on your chest, and your right hand on your abdomen. On the inhale, first fill the chest and then fill the abdomen. On the exhale, first release the abdomen and then empty the lungs in the chest region. [10-15 breaths]

“Now notice the four components of the breath. There is the inhale, the pause before the exhale, the exhale, and the pause before the inhale. See if you can notice each part of your breath as you continue to breathe. [8-10 breaths]

“While still maintaining awareness of each part of your breath, let’s figure out if your inhales and exhales are equal in length. Begin counting on your next inhale. Count slowly and evenly. Stop once you reach the pause before your exhale, and start over at one as you breathe out. Try this a few times. Do you have a longer inhale or exhale, or are they even? [10-12 breaths]

“Now try to make your inhale and exhale equal in length. It helps to count while you breathe. On your next inhale, start at one and count up slowly until you reach the pause before your exhale. As you begin exhaling, start counting again at one and monitor your breath so that you spend the same amount of time on the exhale as you did on the inhale. [10-12 breaths]

“Let’s work on slowing and deepening our breath together. Empty all the air from your lungs. Inhale for 1, 2, 3, & 4, and exhale for 1, 2, 3, & 4. [repeat 5x]

“Slow down and deepen the breath as we inhale for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6, and exhale for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6. Continue to be mindful of each component of your breath. [repeat 5x]

“Let’s see if we can do 8 counts for some really slow and expansive breaths. Inhale for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8, and exhale for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8. [repeat 5x]

“Gently release control of your breathing. Allow your breaths to be effortless and relaxed. [5 breaths]

“When you’re ready, roll onto your right side, using your upper arm as a pillow. Take a few complete breaths, then gently push yourself up into a seated position with your legs crossed and your hands on your knees, keeping your eyes closed. Let’s sit silently like this for a while. Notice your thoughts, and then let them go. [2 minutes]”
“Gently open your eyes. How did that feel?”

Independent Journaling Prompts: Independently, allow students to reflect on the following questions by answering them in their journals:

- Drawing: Draw your favorite animal breaths.
- Writing: How does breathing in feel different from breathing out?
- When you are totally still what movements do you notice in your body?
- Can you think of some other movements where you could breathe in with your body one way and breathe out another?

World Discovery: Ask students to try these pranayama exercises whenever they remember for the next week. Ask them to note how they feel afterwards. Additionally, tell students to use these exercises whenever they feel anxious or overwhelmed as a way to calm down.

Lesson 4: What Do You Stand For? Determining Your Signature Values

Learning Objective: SWBAT demonstrate awareness of personal values and strengths and analyze how those personal qualities influence choices and successes. (1.C)

Key Points:

Materials and Preparation: This lesson will take about 45-50 minutes. For this lesson, you will need a set of “Value Cards” that can be found and printed from this website: <http://casaa.unm.edu/inst/Personal%20Values%20Card%20Sort.pdf>. It is helpful to cut them out prior to teaching this lesson. They can be laminated for repeated use. Additionally, each student will need their journal and a writing utensil.

Opening Mindful Moment: This is an exercise using shoulder rolls for self-awareness and tension release.

Sample Script: Shoulder Rolls

“Take a moment to interact with the space around you. Maybe some very gentle movements will help. Maybe these movements are barely perceptible; maybe they are bigger. Begin to get a sense of the space around you and of your body in relation to that space. Feel free to give yourself a moment here. When you are ready, move toward stillness. At your own pace, begin to make circles with your shoulders. Starting in one direction, begin to get a feeling for some space around your shoulders. These circles can be tiny, barely perceptible. They may also be bigger. In any case, give yourself a moment to explore the way that your shoulders can move. Feel free to reverse the direction of the circles a few times if you like. Your breath is free and easy, as are your movements. Feel free to stay with this one, or you can add something if you like: bring your fingertips to the tops of your shoulders. Now, begin to draw circles with the tips of your elbows. This engages some other muscles that run from your sternum and your collarbones out to the tips of your shoulders – the head of the arm bones. Feel free to give yourself a moment to experiment with some movement here. When you are ready, gently come back toward stillness, toward neutral, and enjoy a few breaths” (Emerson & Hopper, 2011, 94-95.)

Introduction to New Material:

- Ask students to talk with their neighbor to make a list of the values they think have been most important to humans across time and culture. [Give students 3 minutes to complete their answer.]
- After 3 minutes, ask students to share what they came up with. Record their answers on a whiteboard or a SMART board. Emphasize similarities amongst answers. (Teacher Note: the point of having students brainstorm important values across time and culture is to ease them into self-examination by starting with a larger context.)
- Explain to students that today, they are going to determine which values are most important to them as individuals. These values are central to who they are and can help them make decisions that allow them to live life in a meaningful way. These values may or may not align with the answers they chose in the warm-up, because

these values represent what is important to them individually rather than to humanity as a whole.

- Tell students that as human beings, we yearn to experience these values in our daily lives and we find joy in cultivating them in many different areas.

Guided Experiential Practice:

1. Hand out a set of value cards to each student. On top of each set, there should be 3 cards that read, “Very Important to Me”, “Important to Me”, and “Not Important to Me”. Tell students to set those cards out first to establish 3 separate categories. Students should then go through each value card and place it in the appropriate category. It might be helpful for students to do this activity on the floor so they have more room. (5 minutes)
2. Once the initial sorting has been done, tell students to discard the entire pile of cards in the “Not Important to Me” category. Next, tell students (dramatically) to discard the entire pile of cards in the “Important to Me” category. The only remaining cards should be the ones in the “Very Important to Me” category. (1 minute)
3. Tell students that they can only have 10 cards total in the “Very Important to Me” category. They must throw out cards until they reach 10. These are their 10 most important values. (2 minutes)
4. Finally, tell students that they can only have 5 cards total. They must throw out cards until they reach 5. These are their 5 most important values. Have students write these values down in their journals and put their cards back in a pile and put them away. (4 minutes)

Sharing: Ask students if any of their top 5 personal values surprised them.

Independent Journaling Prompts: Tell students that these values should act as a springboard from which they can dive into inquiry on the things that are essential to them in their life. Independently, allow students to reflect on the following questions by answering them in their journals:

- Write about a time when you felt fully alive and totally engaged (when you were experiencing a state of *flow*). Alternatively, students can draw a time in their life when they had this type of experience.
- Which of your signature values did this experience call upon, cultivate, or channel? This is a chance for you to explore what is at work underneath an experience that is essential to your being, so you can give whatever name you want to the value that emerges – it does not have to be limited to the ones you chose with the card sort.
- Are there other things you do that call upon the same qualities?
- Are there activities you might alter in such a way as to cultivate your signature values? Others you might take up?
- Trace these values through as many defining moments of your life as you can. (20 minutes)

World Discovery: Ask students if they can make time this week to engage in an activity that utilizes one of their top 5 personal values.

Closing: The goal of this lesson is to help students reflect on strengths that are already highly cultivated in them. They can draw on these strengths to help them determine potential areas of action, including ways of connecting with their environment, school, community, and with others. These signature strengths are an ideal ingredient for deep flow experiences, which thrive on the confluence of extraordinary skills matched with great challenges. To have the strength alone is not enough, for it must be paired with action. This will lead students to experience a greater sense of well-being, less stress, and increased positive affect (Linley et al., 2010; Wood et al., 2011).

Additional Teacher Resources and Considerations: Students can also take a free survey online to help them determine their strengths. It is offered by the VIA Institute on Character at <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/The-Survey>

Lesson 5: Monkey Mind – Learning to Observe Our Thoughts

Learning Objectives:

- SWBAT demonstrate present-moment focus. (1.A)
- SWBAT demonstrate awareness of their emotions. (1.D)

Key Points:

- This is an introductory meditation practice that allows you to safely explore your thoughts for the first time. We spend so much of our time thinking that we often end up mistaking our thoughts for reality – we confuse the map with the territory. When thoughts appear in meditation, we have the opportunity to explore in exquisite detail how our thinking mind works.
- Knowing that you are not your thoughts is a crucial component of emotional balance. The goal here is not to improve thoughts or exchange negative thinking for positive thinking, it is to start using your head instead of being used by it.

Connection to the Achievement Goal: When we stop getting hooked by our thoughts or lost in them, we can take back the power they have over us and prevent or overcome emotional imbalances.

Assessment: Answers to independent journaling prompts will serve as the formal assessment. Informal assessment should be done through question prompts provided throughout the lesson plan as well as observation during guided experiential practice.

Opening Mindful Moment: This is a calming practice using a Seated Forward Fold.

Sample Script: Seated Forward Fold

“If you like, bring your feet a little farther apart than your hips. As you begin to experiment with this forward fold, you have many options. You can lead your forearms into your thighs – this may be enough of a forward fold. You can also bring your fingertips to the floor, or maybe your hands to the floor. Another option is to take one hand to the opposite elbow and hang freely forward. Feel free to experiment with these options for movement. You can try something, and if that does not work, try something else. Take a moment to experiment. If you like, when you ready, you may wish to gently shake your head yes and no, allowing the muscles in your neck and upper back to release a little bit. You may also choose to gently move your jaw in a way that invites any tension in your jaw to release. Feel free to breathe here for about 20 seconds. When you are ready, begin to move gently back toward your upright Seated Mountain posture, allowing your breath to be free and easy. Please keep in mind that what is calming for one person may be very upsetting for someone else. Ask for feedback, and use your own best judgment to determine the efficacy of this or any exercise” (Emerson & Hopper, 2011, 107-108.)



Seated Forward Fold + Modification

Source: <http://www.ginahardy.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Paschimottanasa3.jpg>;
<http://d3v7xustcq7358.cloudfront.net/blogs.dir/13/files/2012/04/forward-bend-straight.jpg>

Introduction to New Material:

For many of us, this guided relaxation allows us to slow down and observe our thoughts for the first time. Hopefully, our thoughts will slow down enough for us to experience some inner quiet. Where is your mind? If you pay attention to it, you will notice that it tries to escape the present moment to constantly narrate your life. It's exhausting! In this quiet mental space, we might experience what is often called *monkey mind*. Monkey mind is what we typically experience in our usual, non-meditative state. The monkey mind constantly switches from topic to topic, provides a running commentary on everything that happens, and bombards us with a seemingly random stream of thoughts including judgments, to-do lists, song lyrics, images, and assorted memories. It is a hyperactive mind that cannot concentrate on any one thing for very long.

The monkey mind concentrates on things that are in the past or in the future, but not the present. Monkey mind might obsess about past resentments, relive old achievements, worry about the future, or fantasize about how life could be different. The monkey mind does not attend to the present moment.

When we spend all of our time engaging the monkey mind, we are not living in the *now*. We might not hear what a friend is saying to us, we quite literally might not “stop and smell the roses”, we don't fully taste the food we are eating, and we don't pay attention to how things make us feel. To many people, experiencing constant inner dialogue is normal because they have never experienced anything else. Sometimes we are not consciously aware that we are lost in an internal world of thought until something forces us to snap out of it.

When starting a meditation practice, it is important to approach your mind with curiosity and non-judgment. Do not try to change anything about your thoughts at this time. Simply observe. Meditation isn't thinking, but not thinking isn't meditation either. Bringing awareness to the process of thinking and to thoughts as objects of the mind is meditation. Meditation is clear awareness of thinking, which allows us to perceive thoughts as what they actually are – mental events – instead of taking them as something real and solid.

Guided Experiential Practice:

This guided relaxation will help students explore the idea of monkey mind. They might be able to spot their own patterns of thought, repetitive fears, obsessive desires, or

resentful judgments. Remind students not to react to these thoughts, but to simply just observe what their mind is doing.

Tell students to turn off and put away all distractions, including music and cell phones. Then tell students to prepare for relaxation by sitting in a comfortable, upright position or to lie down.

Read the following script.

“When you are settled, imagine that a wave of relaxation is spreading through your entire body. Let go of any holding in your jaw. Let your lips part and your upper and lower teeth separate slightly. Without changing your facial expression, imagine the feeling of a smile. After a moment, bring the feeling of a smile to your heart. Then feel a smile in both lungs and in the space between your shoulder blades. So hum – notice your thoughts, acknowledge them, then let them go and return to your breathing. Feel the weight of your body sink into the mat. All the busyness of your day – let it disappear into stillness. Find that part of you that just IS. Find the part of you that is BEING. The observer, the unchanging part of you that has always existed. The one that experiences. This is the part of you that cannot be disturbed by the inevitable turmoil of life. It is silent. It is an observer.

“Begin to count your thoughts as they arise. It doesn’t matter what kind of thought comes through your mind – a memory, an image, an inner comment about this exercise, a plan for tomorrow, and so on. Whatever it is, it will simply count as one thought. Count thoughts from one to ten, and then begin again at one. If you get lost in counting, simply start again at one. If a judgment about not doing it correctly appears, just count that as a thought too, and keep going.

“Now, visualize yourself sitting on a river bank, and imagine that the water flowing in front of you is your own mind. Your job is to be aware of the thoughts that flow in the stream. You don’t need to catch them, or follow them, or do anything to them. Simply notice them and then watch them go down the current, like leaves floating by.

“Visualize yourself lying in the grass on a lovely clear day. Imagine that your mind is like the vast blue sky above you. Imagine each thought that arises as a cloud formation: some of them will be small, others large; some of them might be puffy and soft, while others will seem dense and heavy. Maybe there are some clouds that cover the sky completely. Still, a cloud is a cloud: it comes and it goes away or vanishes. The task at hand is to see each cloud for what it is” (Cullen, 2015).

Sharing: Read the following quote to students.

“After twenty years of meditation I notice that I still have just as many judgments as when I started practicing – I just don’t believe them anymore.” –James Baraz

Independent Journaling: Independently, allow students to reflect on the following questions by answering them in their journals:

1. Drawing: Draw a picture of a stream and then draw all of your thoughts like things floating down the stream.
2. Writing: From your own experience, what did you observe?
3. Where do you think thoughts come from?

4. What is happening when you are not thinking?

World Discovery: Tell students that when they can witness their thoughts, they can find a greater sense of stillness and relaxation. Instead of just being caught in the storm of their thoughts, they can notice angry, excited, or sad thoughts and simply put them back in the stream. Suggest to students that they try to notice their thoughts wherever they are and work on witnessing them as passing objects in the stream.

Closing Mindful Moment: It is also possible to bring relaxation to your eyes using simple muscle awareness. Whenever you remember, try to soften your focus. Notice any tension in the muscles surrounding your eyes, forehead, and temples. Softly release any tension you feel as you take a few deep breaths.

Additional Teacher Resources and Considerations: It is important to remind students that the point is not to get rid of their thoughts, but to be conscious of them and notice the influence thoughts can have on us. The goal is greater awareness.

Lesson 6: Recognizing and Describing Emotions

Learning Objectives:

- SWBAT demonstrate present-moment focus. (1.A)
- SWBAT demonstrate awareness of their emotions. (1.D)
- SWBAT demonstrate a sense of personal ethical responsibility to themselves and their environment. (1.E)
- SWBAT separate thoughts from emotions and physical sensations.

Key Points:

1. Developing an awareness of moment-to-moment experiences will help students learn how to focus on one thing at a time, and in doing this, students can better control and soothe overwhelming emotions.
2. Recognizing emotions in the present moment can help students learn to identify and separate judgmental thoughts from their experiences. These judgmental thoughts often fuel overwhelming emotions.

Connection to Achievement Goal: This lesson helps students learn to observe and describe their thoughts and emotions more carefully in order to learn how to manage them (in the next unit).

Materials and Preparation: For this lesson, students will need a copy of the “Describe Your Emotion” worksheet, their journals, and writing utensils.

Opening Mindful Moment: This is a centering exercise using Tree Pose.

Sample Script: The Tree

“As you are ready, let’s begin by standing up. You can have your shoes on or off – that is up to you. Once you are standing, bring your palms together in front of your heart. Allow your breath to be free and easy. You may be breathing in and out through your nose or your mouth; for now it doesn’t matter. When you are ready, begin to shift over to your left leg – start to bring your weight into your left foot and leg. You can keep your right toes on the ground or gently turn your right knee out and tuck your right foot up against your left ankle. Another option is to slide your right foot up to your left calf so you are entirely on one foot. You have many options. Feel free to take a moment to explore them. You may try something, and if that does not work, try something else. You are never stuck. You can always change your form. Now, take a moment to consider your gaze. You may choose to look at a point on the floor or the wall in front of you. For some of us it helps to pick a single point to look at, and to gently focus our gaze on that one point. Again, allow your breath to be free and easy. You may also experiment with looking at your fingertips (if your palms are together in front of your heart). Another “gaze” is to close your eyes and turn your attention inward. Closing your eyes may help you to begin to relate to your center. Closing your eyes, even for a breath or two, can be a great way to start to relate to your center. Again, the suggestion is to gently hug in your lower belly if it is helpful. This centering practice is physical, visceral: right in your body in this moment. Take a moment to explore some muscular energy – strength and stability

at your core. Finally, notice how this centering practice affects your balance. Is there any discernable effect when you orient yourself to your center? Switch sides.” (Emerson & Hopper, 2011, 105).



Tree Pose

Source: https://yogawithmaheshwari.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/tree_pose_a.jpg

Introduction to New Material:

So far, the exercises we have done have helped us learn to be more mindful of our physical sensations and thoughts. This exercise will help us become more mindful of our emotions. As with some of the other exercises, the instructions might appear to be simple, but the results can be powerful. This exercise will ask you to choose an emotion and then to describe and explore that emotion through drawing and writing.

Guided Experiential Practice:

- Tell students they will be doing a free-write for three minutes. Tell them that their writing will be completely confidential and they do not have to share it with anyone, even their teacher, if they do not want to.
- Read the following script to students:
“I would like you to write about your very deepest thoughts and feelings about an extremely important emotional issue that has affected you and your life. In your writing, I’d like you to really let go and explore your very deepest emotions and thoughts. You might tie your topic to your relationships with others, including parents, lovers, friends, or relatives; to your past, your present, or your future; or to who you have been, who you would like to be, or who you are now. Do not worry about spelling, sentence structure, or grammar. The only rule is that once you begin writing, you must continue to do so until your time is up.” (Pennebaker 1997, 162).
- Ask students to stop after three minutes. Tell students to jot down specific emotions they felt during the experience. Then, have students jot down specific emotions they are feeling *right now*.

- Tell students to choose one emotion from their list of emotions that they are feeling *right now*. They should choose a specific emotion. If they are having a hard time choosing, here is a list of commonly felt emotions (McKay et al., 2007).

List of Commonly Felt Emotions:

Adored, Afraid, Angry, Annoyed, Anxious, Apologetic, Ashamed, Blessed, Blissful, Bored, Bothered, Broken, Bubbly, Cautious, Cheerful, Confident, Content, Curious, Delighted, Depressed, Determined, Disappointed, Disgusted, Disturbed, Embarrassed, Empty, Energetic, Enlightened, Enlivened, Enraged, Enthusiastic, Envious, Excited, Exhausted, Flirtatious, Foolish, Fragile, Frightened, Frustrated, Glad, Guilty, Happy, Hopeful, Hopeless, Horrified, Hurt, Hysterical, Indifferent, Infatuated, Interested, Irritated, Jealous, Joyful, Lively, Lonely, Loved, Loving, Mad, Nervous, Obsessed, Pleased, Proud, Regretful, Relieved, Respected, Restless, Sad, Satisfied, Scared, Scattered, Secure, Shy, Smart, Sorry, Strong, Surprised, Suspicious, Terrified, Thrilled, Tired, Unsure, Upset, Vivacious, Vulnerable, Worried, Worthless, Worthy

- Once chosen, have students write it at the top of their “Describe Your Emotion” worksheet (found in full size in Appendix B).
- Next, have students draw a picture of what their emotion might look like. This might sound hard to do, but the picture can be anything. It doesn’t have to make sense to anyone else.
- Next, students will think of a sound that describes their emotion. For example, if you are feeling sad, maybe the sound of a groan would describe how you feel, such as “ugh”. Or maybe a certain song expresses your emotion better.
- Then students will describe an action that fits their emotion. For example, if you are feeling bored, a nap would be an appropriate action.
- Next, students will describe the intensity of their emotion. This will require some thought. Do your best

Describe Your Emotion

Name the emotion: _____

Draw a picture of your emotion



1. Describe a related action: _____

2. Describe a related sound: _____

3. Describe the intensity of the emotion: _____

4. Describe the quality of the emotion: _____

5. Describe thoughts related to the emotion: _____

to describe the strength of this emotion. Feel free to be creative – maybe even use a metaphor. For example, if you are feeling very nervous, you might write that the feeling is so strong that your “heart feels like a drum at a rock concert.” Or if you are only feeling a little angry, maybe you write that the intensity is like a “mosquito bite.”

- After describing intensity, students will describe the overall quality of what the emotion feels like. Again, be creative! For example, if you’re feeling nervous, maybe it makes your knees feel like “jelly”. Or if you are getting angry, it might make you feel like “water that’s about to boil.” Be as accurate as you can in your description and be as creative as you need to be in order to convey your feelings.
- Finally, students will add any thoughts that arise due to experiencing their emotion.

Sharing: Ask students if they are willing to share the emotion they chose. Lead a discussion on reasons for similarities or differences among emotions felt by students at this point in time.

Independent Journaling Prompts: Independently, allow students to reflect on the following questions by answering them in their journals:

- When have you experienced this emotion? What causes it?
- Does this emotion occur frequently?
- How do your thoughts change as a result of experiencing this emotion?
- How do your behaviors change?

World Discovery: Encourage students to continue writing down emotionally intense experiences and identifying emotions. In their journal, students should write down 3 more emotional experiences throughout the week, practicing identification of emotions they feel.

Lesson 7: Where Your Attention Goes, Your Intention Goes – The Power of Setting Intentions

Learning Objectives:

- SWBAT identify their thoughts and emotions and analyze how positive and negative thoughts might affect decision-making and responsible behavior. (2.A)
- Students will learn how to identify the intentions that precede their actions and recognize the moment at which an intention can be felt.
- Students will review the basic relationship between cause and effect.
- Students will compose an *Intention Journal* to practice setting a daily intention.
- Students will empower themselves to take a more active role in shaping their lives.

Key Points:

- **Intention** can be thought of as the invisible force that precedes behavior. This force can be a thought, decision, or impulse that leads the body to act in some way.
- By learning to notice the intentions behind our actions, we enable ourselves to choose which type of action we want to take before taking it.
- The most powerful and yet often invisible function of noticing intention is that it affects the outcome of our actions.

Connection to the Achievement Goal: Emotion dysregulation is often a result of several cause and effect moments that happen below the threshold of our awareness. Learning how to notice intention is one way to stop the snowball effect that may result in unintended behavior and/or consequences.

Setting intentions also helps students develop the ability to know what they want before taking action. The idea is that the action can then be better aligned with an expected outcome.

Materials and Preparation: You will need a clock/timer, meditation bell, journals and writing utensils.

Opening Mindful Moment: This is an exercise where students try to stay as still as possible, for as long as possible. Don't worry – it usually doesn't last more than a few minutes!

Sample Script: Still Chillin'

Have students sit in chairs in a circle. Explain to them that the object of "Still Chillin'" is to see who can last the longest without moving. Tell them that they can blink and breathe, but other than that if they move they will be called out for that round. It helps to have a seating chart and cross off each name that you call out for each round. The winner is the last student that is left that has not moved. Let students stretch, laugh, and get any movement out prior to starting the first round. Then, count down from five and ring the meditation bell to start the activity. You may find that students erupt in laughter almost immediately. That's normal and you should facilitate the game two more

times, each time encouraging them to try harder and to breathe to focus. After three rounds, lead a quick discussion on the following questions:

1. How did you stay still? What did you do with your mind? (Definitely ask the winners of each round!)
2. Did you notice a difference in each round?
3. How did focusing on your breath help or not help? (Rechtschaffen, 2014)

Introduction to New Material: Intention can be understood as the invisible force that precedes all behavior. Though often unconscious, it's a thought, decision, or impulse that impels the body to move in some way.

Guided Experiential Practice & Sharing: Tell students that we will be doing an experiment together to see if we can notice one of our intentions. Tell them that they will be trying to sit still for 3 minutes. At some point during this time, they will want to move their body to relieve a feeling of restlessness or discomfort. The point of this experiment is to see if they can catch the feeling of discomfort before actually moving, and to delay the movement by 30 seconds or so. In that short amount of time, they should be able to sense that “about to” moment in which the body is preparing to act – that is the intention. If students can feel this, they have caught the moment of intention preceding the action.

After the exercise, ask students to share their experiences. You might ask, “Were there any movements you wanted to make more than once?”

World Discovery: See if you can notice the intentions behind your actions this week.

Lesson 8: Pratyahara – A Palming Exercise

Learning Objectives:

- SWBAT demonstrate self-regulation in the form of attention, self-control, and body control. (2.E)
- SWBAT tune out external phenomena by selectively paying attention to internal phenomena.

Key Points:

1. Pratyahara is known as *withdrawal of the senses* in yoga. It is the 5th of 8 limbs identified by Patanjali in his text the *Yoga Sutras*. Pratyahara is done in order to help draw attention to the inner workings of the body and mind rather than on external stimuli that is perceived through the five senses.

Opening:

“Many yoga poses are named after animals. Crow, eagle, cobra, and downward facing dog are all excellent examples. [Show pictures of poses included below.]

“Why might these poses be named after animals? [Pause & give students time to answer. Accept all answers. Correct answer: because the pose resembles some aspect of the animal in nature. Crow pose resembles a perched bird; eagle pose is difficult to get into because it requires a lot of concentration, just like an eagle searching for prey; cobra pose mimics a snake preparing to strike, and downward facing dog resembles a dog stretching itself out.]



Crow



Eagle



Cobra



Downward Facing Dog

“Today, I want to think about one animal in particular, the tortoise. What about a tortoise might be beneficial for us to practice in yoga? [Show picture of tortoise pose below. Pause for students to answer. Accept all answers. Correct answer: the tortoise withdraws its limbs inside its shell, just as we aim to withdraw our senses.]



Tortoise Pose

*“The tortoise that withdraws its limbs inside its shell is a great metaphor for **pratyahara, or withdrawal of the senses from the objects that surround us.** When we withdraw our senses from our surroundings, we are able to focus with an undistracted mind. Even if we don’t realize it, our senses are always working to help us perceive what is going on in our environment. It can cause us a lot of stress. Why would we want to*

practice withdrawing our senses? [Pause for students to answer. Accept all answers. Correct answer: we can use that extra power of perception to focus more clearly on our asana or meditation practice.]

“Focusing our attention is important in asana, but it is even more important in meditation. By withdrawing our senses from the distracting objects around us, we are able to pull our attention inward to achieve clarity and focus.”

Introduction to New Material: The things you take in through your senses affects the health of your mind, similar to the way that food affects the health of your body. Until the 20th century, people slowed down when the sun set and stayed that way until the sun rose. That all changed with the invention of electricity. Now, computers, cell phones, TVs, neon lights, and car horns (among others) bring an overload of sensory stimuli that may be much more unsettling to the nervous system than most people ever imagine. Studies show that noisy workplaces can activate the body’s stress response system even when the people do not believe they are stressed. Sensory stimuli make the effects of our already sky-high stress level even worse. It is no wonder that modern-day people are finding it difficult to concentrate!

Pratyahara, or sensory deprivation, is practiced in order to help draw our attention to the inner workings of the body and mind. The reason we practice pratyahara is to escape the sensory overload we experience in our normal lives. Pratyahara is often done before meditation to aid the practitioner in reaching a deeper state of peace and introspection.

Guided Experiential Practice:

“Today, we will be working on withdrawing information from our sense of sight. We will start whenever you are ready. [Allow students to mentally prepare for meditation.]

“Sit in any comfortable seated position, paying special attention to the straightness of your spine. Begin by rubbing your palms together to generate heat for about 15 seconds. Then place your palms over your closed eyes. Do not put any pressure on your eyeballs themselves, because they are sensitive structures. Instead, cup your hand and press your fingers on your eyebrows and press the bottom of your palm on your cheekbones. Continue to keep your chest upright, but allow your head to gently tilt forward.

“Start to tune into your breath. Notice the color and texture of any visual patterns you might experience. Allow these images to come and go. Let the muscles of your face relax – the space between your eyebrows, the muscles around your eyes, the muscles of your cheeks. We will remain like this for a few minutes.” [Allow students to stay like this for 1-5 minutes.]

“Take a few more deep breaths and gently bring your awareness back to this room. Remove your palms from your eyes, keeping them closed. Relax the muscles of your forehead, your cheeks, and around your eyes. Blink your eyes open whenever you feel ready.”

Sharing: Once students are successfully guided out of this exercise, ask the following questions to the group and accept any answers.

- *“How do you feel?”*
- *“Do you feel any more relaxed?”*
- *“Are you able to see with less tension around your eyes?”*

Independent Journaling Prompts: Independently, allow students to reflect on the following questions by answering them in their journals:

1. Drawing: Draw a picture of a tortoise in a situation where it might need to withdraw into its shell.
2. Writing: Describe a situation that might make you want to practice pratyahara. What would be the benefits?
3. How does pratyahara change the way your mind produces thoughts? How does it change the way your body feels?

World Discovery: After introducing students to pratyahara, you can invite them to practice the palming exercise whenever they feel overwhelmed or over stimulated and need a quick break from their current situation in order to collect their thoughts.

Lesson 9: Mindful Breathing Meditation

Learning Objectives:

- SWBAT identify their thoughts and emotions and analyze how positive and negative thoughts might affect decision-making and responsible behavior. (2.A)
- SWBAT demonstrate self-regulation in the form of attention, self-control, and body control. (2.E)

Key Points:

- This is an introductory meditation practice that allows students to safely explore their breath for the first time.
- The single biggest obstacle to meditation is the mistaken belief that the mind has to be silent.

Assessment: Answers to independent journaling prompts will serve as the formal assessment. Informal assessment should be done through question prompts provided throughout the lesson plan as well as observation during guided experiential practice.

Preparation and Materials: It is preferable to begin this lesson with everyone sitting in one large circle of chairs. If chairs are not available, desks will suffice.

Opening Mindful Moment: Spinal Balance Flow – This mini-sequence improves stability, lengthens the neck and spine, and strengthens the lower back and between the shoulder blades.

Read the following teaching cues:

1. Come onto all fours in tabletop pose. Put the hands directly underneath the shoulders and knees directly underneath the hips with the feet hip width apart. The joints should be stacked in a straight line from the shoulder to the elbow to the wrist.
2. Inhale as you lift your right arm and left leg off the floor into a horizontal line. Think about bringing your belly button towards your spine to stabilize your back. Hold for 5 breaths.
3. Exhale and draw the leg and arm back into tabletop pose.
4. Continue the movement on the other side, following the breath.



Introduction to New Material: Awareness of breathing not only helps to train attention, but strengthens the neural pathway that remembers to focus on the breath, making this strategy useful when we're feeling overwhelmed or out of control.

Guided Experiential Practice: Tell students that you are going to guide them through their first meditation practice today. It will take about 10-15 minutes and all they have to do is sit quietly and listen to your voice. Dim the lights and ensure that all students are in a comfortable seated position on the floor or at their desk. Read the following script to students:

“Sit comfortably in your chair with both feet flat on the floor. Maintain equal balance between both feet. Imagine someone has tied a string to the top of your head, and now they are pulling you up toward the ceiling. Feel your spine lift and lengthen and become straighter. Feel more space between your ribcage and your hipbones. Feel an energetic lifting through your spine, through your heart center, across your collarbones, and out through your fingertips. Close your eyes.

“Lift your shoulders high up towards your ears. Release, and draw the shoulder blades down your back. Once again, feel the crown of your head lifting toward the ceiling, and tilt your chin down ever so slightly so that your spine is as straight as possible through your neck. Soften the muscles around your eyes, your cheeks, and your mouth. With your eyes still closed, gaze through the space between your eyebrows.

“Pay attention to the physical sensation of your breath wherever you feel it most strongly in your body. Follow the natural and spontaneous movement of your breath, not trying to change it in any way. Just pay attention to it. If you find that your attention has wandered off to something else, gently but firmly bring it back to the physical sensation of the breath. [Let students remain like this in silence for ~two minutes.]

“Eventually, find equanimity in the length of your inhale and exhale. Full, even breaths. Feel your breath move through your nose, down your throat, and into your lungs. Feel your rib cage and your stomach expand and contract with each breath. [Let students remain like this in silence for ~one minute.]

“Be present. Focus your attention fully and directly on what is happening in this moment. In this place, in this body, in this breath, in this sensation.

“Now, pay attention to whatever comes into your awareness. It doesn't matter if it is a thought, an emotion, or a bodily sensation. Just follow it until something else comes into your awareness. When something new comes into your mind, just pay attention to it until the next thing comes along. Do not try to hold onto anything for too long. Do not try to change what you are experiencing. If you find that your mind is jumping too quickly from thought to thought, gently but firmly guide your awareness back to your breath. Notice your thoughts, acknowledge their existence, and then let them go. [Let students remain like this in silence for ~4 minutes.]

[If you have a bell, sound it now.] “Release any attachment to criticism, judgment, or comparison. As you inhale deeply, breathe in self-respect. As you exhale, breathe out fear and self-doubt. You are exactly where you are supposed to be, and you are having exactly the experience that you need to have right now. You are a silent observer. You are not your thoughts. Remove your attachment to how you think things are supposed to be, and embrace what is. Allow yourself to be exactly who you are, right now, in this moment. [Let students remain like this in silence for ~30 seconds.]

“Open your eyes.”

Sharing: Ask students how the meditation made them feel. Then read the following quotes out loud:

“The entire world is a house of mirrors, reflecting back to us our own internal landscape.” Jaina Portwood

“Our experience begins within and extends outward – pain, bliss, and everything in between.” Talia Peretz

After each quote, stop and ask the students, “What do these quotes mean to you?” Allow students to share out loud, encouraging and accepting all responses.

Independent Journaling Prompts: Independently, allow students to reflect on the following questions by answering them in their journals:

- Did you notice any change in your body or mind after practicing breath awareness for a couple of minutes?
- Did your mind stay focused on the breath the whole time? Were there any thoughts that kept coming back?
- What stood out about this practice?

World Discovery: Encourage students to try this practice once a day for a week, even if it’s only for a few minutes.

Additional Teacher Resources and Considerations: It is advised to have a safe space away from the meditation practice that students can escape to in case they start to feel anxious in the meditation practice. Remind them that they are always able to leave the meditation if they wish, and they are always able to return when they feel ready.

Remember that meditation, especially in beginners, can expose students to intense thoughts and emotions that have not been consciously explored until now.

Lesson 10: Mindful Movement

Learning Objectives:

- SWBAT demonstrate self-regulation in the form of attention, self-control, and body control. (2.E)
- To support coordination and attentive body awareness and to become aware of the body in motion as a way to learn about personal physical boundaries and the boundaries of others.

Key Points:

- Movements help support students in experiencing connection and aliveness in their bodies while also enhancing their capacity to relax and be centered.
- Yoga is the union of body and mind. The mediator between the two is the breath.
- Practicing asana is not about doing each pose perfectly. It is about using the postures to understand and transform yourself.

Assessment: Answers to independent journaling prompts will serve as the formal assessment. Informal assessment should be done through question prompts provided throughout the lesson plan as well as observation during guided experiential practice.

Opening Mindful Moment: *“Now that we are so aware of the sensations in our bodies, let’s see what our bodies feel like in motion. Let’s all pick up a pencil and write our names in slow motion. After you’ve tried that, try writing with your non-dominant hand. We all probably write our names so many times in one day that we do it on autopilot. Let’s slow down so much that we notice every movement, every touch of the pencil on our fingers, and the weight and touch of the pencil on the page. What was that like to be so slow and aware?”*

“Now that you can be aware of your smaller body movements, you can actually become aware while you’re walking. To begin we can do a slow-motion stand-up. Before you stand, you may notice your muscles and body getting ready. Your body is an amazing machine with muscles, bones, tendons, and a nervous system that sends messages to all of these parts.

“After we slowly stand up, see if you can be aware of every tilt, every bend, and every muscle contracting and relaxing. What was that like to stand up so slowly?”

“When you were a baby, you didn’t know how to walk, and now we do it so much we don’t even have to think about it. Let’s begin by lifting one foot and breathing in and then letting the foot fall as we breathe out. Just standing in place, notice how your body feels as you breathe in and out, lifting and dropping your feet. When you’re ready we’ll walk around the room in a circle, making sure we don’t touch anyone else, feeling our feet rise and fall. We can feel the ground beneath us and our bodies moving back and forth. Now come back to your original place. What was that like?” (Rechtschaffen, 2014).

Introduction to New Material:

- The word *asana* means posture. The asanas are the postures or poses we practice in yoga. Practicing an asana makes you conscious and aware of what you’re doing

with your body. It is what you put into the asana that makes it valuable. Asana is like an empty vessel – worthless until you put something valuable into it such as 1) an intention to move your body or 2) pranayama, conscious breathing techniques.

- Yoga is the union of body and mind. The mediator between the two is the breath. Today, we will practice making the breath the most important part of our yoga practice.
- Be present. Focus your attention fully and directly on what is happening in this moment, this place, this body, this breath, and this sensation.
- Allow the breath to initiate and guide the movement of the body.
- Every asana has an effect, or something it is intended to make you feel. It is your job to listen to your body and figure out what that effect is.
- The study of asana is not about mastering postures. It is about using the postures to understand and transform yourself.

Guided Experiential Practice:

“Lying on our backs in savasana, we are going to begin the practice of resting breath awareness. Consciously have the intention of making your breathing effortless. Make sure there is equal weight on both sides of the body, lengthen the spine all the way through the top of your head. Really straighten out the curvature in the neck by tilting the chin towards the chest and drawing the head back slightly. Throughout this practice, we will be creating mind-body connections by bringing awareness to specific regions of the body.

“Rotate the shoulders outward so that the forearms and palms face up. Let your feet flop open. Place your left hand on your upper abdomen at the top of your ribcage, and place your right hand on your lower abdomen beneath your ribcage. Begin to feel the natural rise and fall of your body as you breathe. Observe any fluctuations in depth and speed of your breathing. This is normal. Release any control over your breath. [Allow students to stay like this for ~2 minutes.]

“Start to deepen the breath and slow it down. A good way to do this is by counting to 4 on the inhale and 4 on the exhale, making sure that both are equal. Draw your focus to your exhale. Are you exhaling completely? Is all the air moving out of your lungs with each breath? [Allow students to stay like this for ~1 minute.]

*“On your next inhale, take a full body stretch with the arms overhead. As you exhale, tuck your knees into your chest for **apanasana**. Exhale all the air out of your lungs. Inhale, full body stretch. Exhale, **apanasana**. Continue these movements. Let your breath guide you. If I am going too fast or too slow, ignore me and go at your own pace. [Students should complete 5-8 repetitions.]*



“After your next exhale, keep the knees bent and set your feet on the ground. Straighten your arms out to the sides and let them feel heavy on the floor. Release control of your breath. With your movement initiating at your hips, allow your bent legs to slowly

drop to the right side of your body. Your feet might come up off the ground. That is okay. On your next inhale, bring your knees back to center. As you exhale, slowly drop the legs to the left side of your body. Inhale, center. Exhale, drop the knees to the right. Inhale, center. Exhale, drop the knees to the left. Option to straighten one or both legs as you continue, using your breath as a guide. These are called **windshield wipers**. [Students should complete 5-10 repetitions.]



“After your next inhale, keep the knees bent and drop both feet flat on the ground. Drop both knees to the left side of your body for a **supine spinal twist**. This should feel really good after those windshield wipers. Release control of your breath, and draw your gaze over your right shoulder for a little neck stretch. Release any tension you feel along your spine. After a few deep breaths, inhale and bring the knees back to center and drop the knees to the right side of the body. Draw your gaze over your left shoulder.



“Inhale to bring the knees back up to center and uncross them. As you exhale, extend the legs long and straight while bringing the arms overhead for a full body stretch. On your exhale, bend only the right knee and bring it to your chest. Exhale all the air out of your lungs. Full body stretch on the inhale. Exhale, bring the left knee to the chest. Inhale, full body stretch. Exhale, right knee bends. Inhale, stretch. Exhale, left knee. Inhale, stretch. Continue at your own pace. This is called **lymphatic pump** because it gets all the lymph flowing through your body, aiding in detoxification. [Students should complete 5-10 repetitions.]



*“On your next inhale, stay in a stretched position for a **lying lateral stretch**. Bring your feet and your hands toward the right side of the room. Feel a big stretch through your left side. Take a few deep breaths here, breathing deep into your left lung. Inhale and take another full body stretch. Other side.*

Sharing: *“How many of you have ever heard of something called ‘being in the flow’ or ‘being in the zone’? Many sports stars, dancers, musicians, and others who are masterful at their art talk about a state called the ‘flow’ or being in the ‘zone’. That’s really a way of describing being totally mindful. We all experience this sometimes when we are jumping rope, walking quietly in the woods, kicking a soccer ball into the goal, or dunking a ball through a hoop. We can have the experience where all of our thoughts seem to fade into the background and we are absorbed into the sounds, smells, and sensations of our bodies. The more mindful we are of our bodies, the less our thoughts tie us up and the more we are free. And that makes us better at what we’re doing, and able to have more fun at it. What does being in the ‘flow’ mean to you? Have you ever experienced this feeling?” (Rechtschaffen, 2014).*

Independent Journaling Prompts: Independently, allow students to reflect on the following questions by answering them in their journals:

- Drawing: Draw a picture of yourself doing something mindfully in your life.
- Writing: What movements could you be aware of as you go through your day?
- How could being more aware of your movements help you?
- What stops you from being aware of your body?

World Discovery: After a mindful movement class, you can invite students to become aware of their movements in everyday life. A good way to do this is to have them pick one movement they do every day such as brushing their teeth, opening a door, practicing an instrument, or stopping at a traffic light. When they choose their movement they are instructed to try and notice every time that movement happens in their daily life and to be as aware as they can be during that experience by observing their perceptions using all five senses.

Closing Mindful Moment:

“We will end with a few minutes of meditation. Bring yourself into an easy-seated position with your palms resting gently on your knees. Inhale the breath deeply into the body. Release as you exhale. Release judgment, attachment, expectations... try to free yourself from being your thoughts. You are the silent observer of your thoughts. They do not define you. We are working on removing attachment to external things and embracing what already is. We are allowing ourselves to be exactly what we are. In this moment, we have everything we need. Inhale acceptance, exhale self-doubt. [Allow students to sit for ~2 minutes.]

“When you are ready, gently open your eyes.” [Give students time to transition back to their seats.]

Lesson 11: Connecting Movement to Breath

Learning Objectives:

- SWBAT demonstrate self-regulation in the form of attention, self-control, and body control. (2.E)
- To support coordination and attentive body awareness and to become aware of the body in motion as a way to learn about personal physical boundaries and the boundaries of others.

Key Points:

- Movements help support students in experiencing connection and aliveness in their bodies while also enhancing their capacity to relax and be centered.
- Yoga is the union of body and mind. The mediator between the two is the breath.
- Practicing asana is not about doing each pose perfectly. It is about using the postures to understand and transform yourself.

Assessment: Answers to independent journaling prompts will serve as the formal assessment. Informal assessment should be done through question prompts provided throughout the lesson plan as well as observation during guided experiential practice.

Opening Mindful Moment: This is a meditation exercise on facial relaxation.

Sample Script: Relaxing the Face

“Many people carry tension in the face. You may squint, grind your teeth, or hold your mouth in a particular position for long periods of time. The tension can extend down into the neck or upward into the scalp. Many headaches are a direct result of this kind of tension.

“Be sure to inhale fully and then exhale with each step of this exercise.

“Taking a few deep breaths, focus your attention on your face, head, and neck. Allow your eyes to close, and rest your tongue against the roof of your mouth. As you breathe out, imagine that your eyes are slightly further apart. Don’t use your muscles, just imagine what happens. Allow your jaw to drop slightly. Imagine that your eyebrows are resting on a soft cushion. Again, imagine your eyes are slightly further apart. Tip your head slightly backward and forward until you find a comfortable position. Imagine that your ears are slightly further back on your head. Continue the deep breaths for a few moments. Complete your meditation as you are ready, gently opening your eyes again and letting your breathing return to normal.” (Clement, 2002, p. 160.)

Guided Experiential Practice: Below are three asana sequences for students that vary in difficulty. The first option is for beginners and is mostly preparatory poses. The second option is an intermediate asana sequence composed of sun salutations A and B. The third option is an advanced asana sequence for students that have experience practicing yoga, most likely for a year or more.

Option 1: Preparatory Poses for Beginning High School Yoga Practitioners

The following asanas (postures) will be presented in this order:

Sukhasana

- Find an easy seated position on the floor, crossing the legs, placing the palms on the knees with the arms relaxed and back straight.



Cat/Cow



Benefits

- Mobilises the spine
- Strengthens the abdominal muscles
- Creates internal tissue pumps to eliminate stale blood and lymphatic fluids from the internal organs of the lower torso by increasing the circulation
- Mobilises the scapulae on the rib cage
- Relieves spinal muscle tension
- Massages the abdominal organs
- Synchronises movement of the body with the appropriate breath to open and close the chest
- Calms the nervous system with the connection of breath and movement

Teaching Technique

- Start on all fours. Hands directly underneath the shoulders and knees directly underneath the hips with the feet hip width apart.
- Exhale into the lower abdomen**, drawing it back and up, drawing the tailbone under. Pressing the hands into the floor, allowing the scapula to move away from spine to broaden the back forming an arch in the spine
- Inhale into the middle of the chest, engage pelvic floor stability** as you lift the tailbone in the opposite direction, rolling through the spine and lastly lengthening the neck inviting the scapula together
- Ensure you are not collapsing the spine as you inhale moving into a “release valve”**
- Continue the movement with the breath. Breath contained in movement.
- Become aware of the spine and try to move one vertebra at a time.
- Return to all fours.

Child's Pose



Downward Facing Dog



Benefits

- Strengthens the upper body in a stabilising position
- Strengthens the arms
- Lengthens the hamstrings and calves
- Calms the nervous system
- Creates extension of the entire spine

Teaching Technique Vinyasa Krama Sequence

1. Start in extended Vajrasana with the arms out at a suitable length
2. Keeping the hands in this position inhale into the chest with a sense of expansion and come onto all fours
3. Create external rotation in the shoulder joint. Spread the fingers wide with the 'V' of the index and middle fingers pointing forward, press the middle finger into the mat and distribute the weight evenly through the hands, have a sense of lifting up so as not to force weight into wrists
4. Exhale and tuck the toes under. Lightly draw the lower abdomen back and up. Lift the knees off the floor lifting the sitting bones towards the ceiling keeping the knees bent and focus on lengthening the spine first then if possible the heels towards the floor

Mountain Pose



Benefits

- Brings awareness to correct, balanced standing posture
- Strengthens core muscles
- Brings ease to breathing

Teaching Technique

1. Stand with the feet together or hip width apart
2. Activate the thigh muscles lifting the kneecaps
3. Engage pelvic floor stability subtly, standing in axial extension
4. Draw scapula together gently to feel the opening of the chest
5. Broaden the shoulders and chest
6. Extend the crown of the head towards the ceiling, lengthening through the back of the neck
7. Point the fingers towards the floor arms slightly away from the body

Tree Pose



Benefits

- Strengthens the ankles and knees
- Enhances focus
- Improves balance
- Calms the nervous system

Teaching Technique

1. Stand in Samasthiti
2. Take the weight onto the left leg slightly bending the right leg. Hands on hips
3. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest with a sense of expansion. Take hold of the right ankle and press the sole of the right foot into the inside of the left thigh taking it as high into the groin as possible. Resist slightly through the upper thigh to stabilise the pose. Keep the gaze forward for balance - chin down slightly
4. **Exhale** and activate the pelvic floor, drawing the lower abdomen back and up to create core stability
5. **Inhale** into the chest, lift the arms side and up pressing the palms together overhead or keeping the arms at shoulder distance fingers pointing upwards
6. Stay in position for a few breaths settling the mind and the body

Warrior II



Benefits

- Strengthens and tones the legs and promotes balance
- Mobilises the spine
- Strengthens the shoulder, back and chest muscles
- Lengthens the adductors on the back leg
- Invigorates the nervous system
- Develops stamina and strength
- Increases the range of movement in the hips
- Expands and opens the ribcage, increasing the volume of the breath
- Develops the postural alignment of the feet and ankles

Teaching Technique

1. Stand in Samasthiti facing the short edge of your mat
2. Turn and step the feet a comfortable distance apart so that the hips are now facing the long edge of the mat and the feet parallel to the short edges of both ends of the mat
3. Create a lateral line from left ankle to knee to hip. Left foot parallel to short edge or turned in slightly. Press firmly through the entire foot, activate the arches, so as to create a stable base
4. Turn the right foot out 90 degrees aligning the heel of the right foot with the centre arch **or** heel of the left foot. Use whichever option feels more comfortable for you

Wide-Legged Forward Fold



Benefits

- Strengthens the legs, feet and ankles, promotes stability of legs
- Lengthens the adductor muscles
- A mild inversion it lowers the blood pressure, rests the heart
- Calms the mind and central nervous system

Teaching Technique

1. Stand in Samasthiti facing the short edge of your mat
2. Step the feet out to face the long edge of the mat creating a comfortable distance where you can feel stable and connected. Square the hips to the long edge of the mat, ensuring the feet are parallel with the short edges of the mat and toes pointing forward. Take the hands to the waist
3. **Inhale** as you raise the arms forward and overhead lengthening evenly through the torso, chin down
4. **Exhale** lower abdomen in and upward as you fold forward from the hips. Once your shoulders are in line with your hips, take the hands to the floor underneath the shoulders
5. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest as you extend the spine keep the chin down but feel the length in the back of the neck
6. **Exhale, hinging at the hips**, walk the hands back between the feet folding into a deeper forward bend, bending the knees as needed to release the hamstrings. Keep the hands in line with the feet and shoulder width apart, bending at the elbows
7. **Inhale engage the pelvic floor**, walk the hands forward underneath the shoulders
8. **Exhale** take the hands to the waist
9. **Inhale middle of the chest, activate the back, engage pelvic floor** as you rise back up
10. **Exhale release the arms by the side and let go of the posture**
11. Repeat 3- 5 times

Baby Cobra



Benefits

- Strengthens the spinal muscles
- Relieves stress and fatigue
- Preparation for more intense back bends
- Strengthens the hands, wrists, elbows shoulders and arms
- Lengthens the front of the body from the pubic bone to the sternum
- Creates internal stretching of the torso promoting increased circulation of blood and lymph
- Believed to promote digestion, elimination and stimulate internal organs of the lower torso
- Believed to release gas from the intestines and is beneficial for constipation
- Mobilises the vertebrae promoting a supple spine
- Stretches the intercostal muscles and expands the ribcage
- Increases the capacity to breathe
- The buttocks and inner legs are strengthened and toned
- Believed to increase internal body heat and stimulate internal organs

Teaching Technique

1. Lie prone on the mat resting the forehead onto the mat
2. Place the hands underneath the shoulders
3. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest with a sense of expansion
4. **Exhale** draw the lower abdomen back and up towards the spine, pressing the tailbone into the floor, keeping the legs active
5. **Inhale engage PFS and** focus on the middle of the chest with a sense of expansion, activate the back lift the chest and lengthen from the top of the spine, allow the hands to have a feeling of drawing back towards the hips as the torso peels of the floor to enter the pose, Keep the chin down
6. Lift only as high as you could if you were to take the hands off the floor
7. **Exhale** and release to prone position, turning the head either to right or left, letting go of pelvic floor and the energetic feel of the pose
8. **Repeat 3- 5 times**

Bridge



Benefits

- Calms the mind
- Rejuvenates tired legs
- Strengthens the feet and the ankles
- Strengthens the gluteals, hamstrings and upper back muscles
- Strengthens the quadriceps and stabilizes the knee
- Expands the chest
- Beneficial for thoracic kyphosis
- Creates a cranial sacrum pump promoting the circulation of spinal fluid
- Stretches the intercostals and expands the ribcage
- Thyroid, parathyroid glands compressed increasing the circulation of blood and lymph
- Stimulates the Central Nervous System (CNS)
- Believed to alleviate tension headaches
- Releases muscular tension in the chest muscles of pectoralis major and minor
- Releases muscular tension in the anterior shoulder muscles

Teaching Technique

1. Lie supine on the mat, create an equal distribution of weight between the left and the right sides of the body, adjust through the neck drawing the scapula together slightly and the chin pivoting at the Dens so as to lengthen through the neck
2. Bend both knees and place heels close to the buttocks, feet hip width apart
3. Place the arms alongside the body, pressing the hands lightly into the floor
4. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest with a feeling of expansion
5. **Exhale** lower abdomen back and up slightly to the spine

Forward Fold



Benefits

- Paschimottasana creates a stretch that releases tension along the entire back of the body from the heels to the attachment of the skull to the cervical spine
- Massages the abdominal organs and aids digestion.
- Beneficial for infertility and reproductive organs
- Forward bends introvert and calm the mind, reduces anxiety and stress
- Reduces fatigue, releases tension in the neck, tension headaches and insomnia
- Reduces high blood pressure and softens the eyes
- An opportunity to practice Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi

Teaching Technique

1. Start in Dandasana
2. Bend the knees to the required position. Feet flat on the floor, hip width distance
3. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest with a sense of expansion and extend the arms up towards the ceiling, chin drawing down
4. **Exhale** and lightly draw the lower abdomen back and up have a sense of reaching out with the arms as you fold forward, softening the knees appropriately and lay the torso along the thighs, chin down, arms resting where comfortable
5. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest with a sense of expansion and extend through the spine lifting and lengthening the front of the body and the back of the body

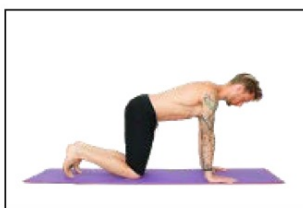
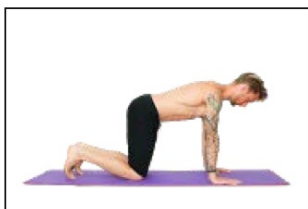
Sure-I-yah
Level 1 postures

SURYA=

sun

NAMASKAR=

salutation/salute/greeting;



Benefits

- Tones and strengthens the muscles of the physical body
- Creates tissue pumps that promote lymphatic drainage
- Increases the circulation and prepares the physical body for an asana practice
- Creates loads and levers that promote symmetry of the body
- Prepares the body for more sophisticated asanas and Pranayamas
- Increases the volume of the breath in both inhalation and exhalation
- Stretches and opens the Nadis within the body so that Prana can flow freely

Teaching Technique

1. Stand in Samasthiti at the front of your mat
2. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest with a sense of expansion as you raise the arms up into Urdvha Hastasana or adjust the height according to the ROM in shoulders
3. **Exhale** and draw the lower abdomen back, as you fold forward pivoting from the hips, bend knees appropriately suited for you, lay your torso along your thighs with an intimate connection and allow the arms to rest where they reach
4. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest as you lengthen the spine and gaze forward and down, keep the neck long
5. **Exhale** step back with awareness into high plank then lowering knees onto mat, to come to all fours, add a breath here – Inhale –
6. **Exhale** lower abdomen, lowering the torso onto mat, in preparation for Bhujangasana, hands alongside the shoulders,
7. Activate legs, ensure tops of feet are pressing into floor evenly and gently press the pubic bone into floor **Inhale middle of chest, engage PFS and whilst simultaneously drawing the hands back towards the hips, peel the chest off the floor, lengthening from the top of the spine to come into Bhujangasana** gazing forward and down slightly
8. **Exhale** lower abdomen, bend the knees bent as you transition so the focus is on the spine then straighten legs if accessible
9. Stay and breathe
10. At the **end of an exhale**, gaze between the hands and step the feet back to the hands noticing which leg moves first, softening the knees as needed
11. **Inhale** into the chest as you extend the spine and gaze forward and down keeping neck long
12. **Exhale** draw the lower abdomen back and up as you fold into Uttanasana. Laying the torso along the thighs and bending the knees
13. **Inhale** lengthen the arms alongside the ears or appropriately placed, activate the back, subtly engage pelvic floor stability during the transition back to standing with feet firmly connected to mat. (Have a sense of reaching out with your arms as you come back to standing)
14. **Exhale** lower the hands back to the sides in Tadasana

Variations - for beginners/ those who are at this level of transitioning

- A. Instead all fours -move into Chatarunga. Urdvha Mukha Svanasana instead of Bhujangasana. (This means taking the extra breath out that was added in all fours).
- B. Add short or long levers (ie. arms), so you can take the hands to hips during the transitions into/ out of Uttanasana

- C. Widen the legs in Bhujangasana, if any pressure or lower back pain or past lower back/ SI injury
- D. Keep in mind the breath development so if the student does not have a long exhale then modify the movements on the exhale until this has been addressed

Teaching Technique for modified series

1. Stand in Samasthiti at the front of your mat
2. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest with a sense of expansion as you lift the arms to the side and up into Urdvha Hastasana or adjust the height according to the ROM in shoulders
3. **Exhale** and draw the lower abdomen back, engaging pelvic floor and up as you fold forward pivoting from the hips, bend knees appropriately suited for you. Lay your torso along your thighs with an intimate connection and allow the arms to rest where they reach
4. **Inhale** into the chest as you extend the spine and gaze forward lengthening the neck and chin down
5. **Exhale** step back with awareness into high plank lowering into or fours, with the knees as far from hands as comfortable to allow space to transition to floor
6. **Inhale** into the middle of chest (Note: breath added)
7. **Exhale**, lower abdomen, engage your serratus anterior to stabilise the scapula, (a feeling of drawing these muscles under arm, down towards hips) have an intention to press through the middle finger - hands connected to floor, and slowly lower down into preparation for Bhujangasana, whilst pushing knees away from shoulders, adjust the hands behind the shoulders, arms close to body
8. **Inhale**, engage pelvic floor to stabilise and support the lower back with a focus of drawing tail under slightly and come into Bhujangasana whilst either lifting hands from floor or from a connected place of hands on floor, draw the hands back towards the hips, so as to allow length in the spine, and gently rise the torso off the floor, keep the chin down and lengthen the neck, shoulders broad and away from ears, keep pressing the feet into the floor, legs activated
9. **Exhale** come back to the floor turning the head either to either the right or left side and completely RELAX and let go. Notice the side you turn your head
10. **Inhale** come onto all fours, adjust if needed
11. **Exhale** roll over the toes into Adho Mukha Svanasana. Keep the knees bent as you transition so the focus is on the spine, then if appropriate straighten legs, adjust the length as needed
12. **Inhale**, gaze between the hands and step the feet back to the hands noticing which leg moves first

Exhale draw the lower abdomen back and up as you fold into Uttanasana softening the knees appropriately, laying torso close to thighs or along thighs.

Inhale lengthen the arms alongside the ears (or appropriately placed), activate the back, subtly engage pelvic floor stability, transition back to standing with feet firmly connected to mat. (Have a sense of reaching out with your arms as you come back to standing)
13. or roll up one vertebrae at time, ensuring you are maintaining pelvic floor stability during the transition and that the feet firmly connected to mat.
14. **Exhale** lower the hands back to the sides in Tadasana.

SURYA NAMASKAR B

Sure-I-yah Nama-SCAR B; SURYA- sun Namaskar= salutation/salute; Level 1 postures



Benefits

- Tones and strengthens the muscles of the physical body
- Creates tissue pumps that promote lymphatic drainage
- Increases the circulation and prepares the physical body for an asana practice
- Creates loads and levers that promote symmetry of the body
- Prepares the body for more sophisticated asanas and Pranayamas
- Increases the volume of the breath in both inhalation and exhalation
- Stretches and opens the Nadis within the body so that Prana can flow freely

Teaching Technique

1. Stand in Samasthiti at the front of your mat
2. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest with a sense of expansion as you lift your arms forward and up into Utkatasana
3. **Exhale** and draw the abdomen back and up as you fold forward pivoting from the hips and laying the torso along the thighs, straightening legs with this connection between thighs/ torso placing the hands where they reach, in Uttanasana
4. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest as you extend the spine and gaze forward
5. **Exhale** and either step back into high plank lowering into Chaturanga Dandasana
6. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest, roll over the toes and lengthen into Urdvha Mukha Svanasana, engaging pelvic floor activity for lower lumbar safety
7. **Exhale** and draw the abdomen back and up as you roll over the toes, lifting the hips off the floor and pressing through the hands into Adho Mukha Svanasana keeping knees bent and lengthening spine first before legs are straightened
8. **Inhale** into the middle of the chest; press firmly the left foot down keeping the hips articulated to the short edge of the mat, and step the right foot forward between the hands. Lift the arms side and up come into Virabhadrasana 1
9. **Exhale** take the hands either side of the right foot and step the leg back into high plank and lower into Chaturanga Dandasana
10. **Inhale** into the chest, roll over the toes and lift and lengthen into Urdvha Mukha Svanasana maintaining pelvic floor activity
11. **Exhale** and draw the abdomen back and up as you roll over the toes, lifting the hips off the floor and pressing through the hands into Adho Mukha Svanasana keeping knees bent and lengthening spine first before legs are straightened
12. **Inhale** plant the right foot down on the mat, toes pointing forward. Step the left foot forward between the hands. Lift the arms side and up come into Virabhadrasana 1
13. **Exhale** take the hands either side of the left foot and step the leg back into high plank and lower into Chaturanga Dandasana
14. **Inhale** roll over the toes and lift and lengthening into Urdvha Mukha Svanasana, maintaining pelvic floor activity
15. **Exhale** and draw the abdomen back and up as you roll over the toes, lifting the hips off the floor and pressing through the hands into Adho Mukha Svanasana keeping knees bent and lengthening spine first before legs are straightened
16. Stay and breathe
17. At the **end of an exhale**, gaze between the hands and step the feet back to the hands

18. **Inhale** into the chest, extend the spine and gaze forward
19. **Exhale** draw the abdomen back and up and fold into Uttanasana keeping the torso and thighs intimately connected
20. **Inhale, engage pelvic floor stability** and take the arms forward and up, bending the knees and coming into Utkatasana
21. **Exhale** lower the hands back to the sides in Samastihiti

Variations

- (a) When stepping into Virabhadrasana 1 – break down the transition to ensure the awareness of the articulation of the hips is maintained and the connection of back foot to mat is continued during the lift into Virabhadrasana 1
1. **Exhale** and draw the abdomen back and up as you roll over the toes, lifting the hips off the floor and pressing through the hands into Adho Mukha Svanasana keeping knees bent and lengthening spine first before legs are straightened
2. **Inhale**
3. **Exhale** ground down the right foot down on the mat firmly, toes pointing forward. Step the left foot forward between the hands, stabilise and ground the feet
4. Inhale engaging pelvic floor stability now Lift the arms side and up come into Virabhadrasana 1- (transition to standing with arms reaching or rolling up one vertebrae at a time.)

This can be practised in this way - Ardho Mukha Svasasana – Virabhadrasana 1 - Ardho Mukha Svasasana

- (b) **B)** Chatarunga can be changed into all fours and Urdhva Mukha Svasana into Bujangasana with added breaths dependant upon the breath of practitioner.

Drishti

- Refer to individual asanas

Bandha

- Refer to individual asanas

Dynamics

- Refer to individual asanas
- Keep the breath slow and even

Functional Classification

- Samasthiti
- Pascimatana
- Purvatana







Preparatory Poses

- Bidilasana
- Adho Mukha Svanasana

Counter Poses

- Tadasana
- Savasana

Option 3: A Sample Asana Sequence for Advanced High School Yoga Practitioners

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
|  <p>1. Easy Seated Position (sukhasana). 1-3 min. Welcome, close eyes, set intention, check in with body, explore Ujjayi breath.</p> |  <p>2. Child's pose (balasana). 5 breaths. Caution sensitivity to the knees and lower back.</p> |  <p>3. Cat/Cow. Awaken the spine with 5 rounds of cat-cow, then move to downward dog.</p> |  <p>4. Downward dog (adho mukha svanasana). 10 breaths, getting aligned, rooting, extending.</p> |
|  <p>5. Classical Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskara). 3 times, then come back to downward dog.</p> |  <p>6. Warrior I (Virabhadrasana I). Stay 5 breaths, then do the next asana.</p> |  <p>7. Prayer Twist (Parivrtta Ashta Chandrasana). 5 breaths, then vinyasa to downward dog and repeat poses 6-7 on other side. Vinyasa to standing mountain pose.</p> |  <p>8. Warrior II (Virabhadrasana II). From standing, step back into pose. Hold the first side 5 breaths, then transition to the next asana.</p> |
|  <p>9. Extended Side Angle (Utthita Parsvakonasana). 5 breaths, then switch sides and repeat asanas 8-9.</p> |  <p>10. Triangle Pose (Utthita Trikonasana). 10 breaths on first side, then transition to the next asana.</p> |  <p>11. Wide-Legged Forward Fold (Prasarita Padottanasana C). 5 breaths, then turn to do asana 10 on other side.</p> |  <p>12. Pyramid Pose (Parsvottanasana). Slide back foot in slightly to prepare. 5 breaths on the first side, then transition to the next asana.</p> |



13. Revolved Triangle Pose (Parivrtta Trikonasana). 5 breaths, then switch sides for asanas 12-13.



14. Sun A. Flow to downward dog.



15. Crescent Lunge (Ashta Chandrasana). Hold 5 breaths on the first side, then transition to the next asana.



16. Warrior III (Virabhadrasana III). 5 breaths on the first side, then transition back to crescent lunge and vinyasa to other side.



17. Child's Pose (Balasana). Rest for 1 minute.



18. Camel Pose (Ustrasana). 5 breaths, then either rest and repeat once or transition to the next asana.



19. Bridge Pose (Setu Bandha Sarvangasana). 1-3 times, holding for 5-10 breaths.



20. Seated Twist (Ardha Matsyendrasana). 5 breaths on each side.



21. Janu Sirasana. 10 breaths on each side.



22. Butterfly (Baddha Konasana). 10 breaths.



23. Forward Fold (Paschimottanasana). 1 minute.



24. Plow Pose (Halasana). 5 breaths.



25. Shoulder Stand (Salamba Sarvangasana). 1 minute.



26. Ear-Pressing Pose (Karnapidasana). 5 breaths.



27. Fish Pose (Matsyasana). 5 breaths.



28. Corpse Pose (Savasana). 5 minutes.



29. Easy Seated Position (Sukhasana). Sit in meditation, revisit intention, Namaste.

Closing Mindful Moment: Tell students to find a comfortable seated position on their yoga mat. “Release any attachment to criticism, judgment, or comparison of yourself. Breathe in respect for yourself. Breathe out acceptance.”

Additional Considerations: Remember that these poses do not have to be attempted in this order, nor do students have to try every single one of them. Let them explore the poses at their own pace, only trying poses they feel comfortable with.

Lesson 12: Judgments vs. the Present Moment

Learning Objectives:

- SWBAT evaluate how expressing one's thoughts and emotions in different situations affects others (both positively and negatively). (2.B)
- SWBAT generate ways to develop more positive thoughts, emotions, and attitudes. (2.C)

Key Points:

- When we are busy making judgments and criticisms, we are unable to fully engage with the present moment in order to experience what is actually happening.
- Judgments can trigger overwhelming emotions and lead to disappointment and suffering.

Assessment: Answers to independent journaling prompts will serve as the formal assessment. Informal assessment should be done through question prompts provided throughout the lesson plan as well as observation during guided experiential practice.

Opening Mindful Moment: Viloma Pranayama – Viloma breath means to go against the grain, to interrupt and thus expand either the inhalation or the exhalation.

Sample Script: Viloma Pranayama

Cautions: This exercise could be dangerous for people with high blood pressure, cardiovascular problems, vertigo, cerebral disease or mental defects and should not be practiced.

Read the following script to students:

“To begin, we will work on the exhalation phase. Lying in savasana on the floor with an elongated spine, relax the body and begin conscious chest to abdomen breathing, noticing the four components of the breath. Allow your breath to stabilize.

“Inhale fully and smoothly until the inhalation is completed, pause, and retain the breath. Now begin to exhale a little bit at a time – exhale – pause – exhale – pause (about 3-5 pauses) until the exhalation is completed and the lungs are emptied. When you are at the maximum breath begin to inhale slowly, smoothly, and deeply until the inhalation is completed and begin again.

“Use your own ratio to initiate the practice, but eventually you should try to expand upon it as you continue practicing. Feel free to increase or decrease the number of pauses to best suit you and your breathing pace.

“Practice this breath for up to 11 more rounds.

“Return to your natural breath and then move into a resting breath, letting go of the practice completely.”

“When you're ready, roll onto your right side, using your upper arm as a pillow. Take a few complete breaths, then gently push yourself up into a seated position with

your legs crossed and your hands on your knees, keeping your eyes closed. Let's sit silently like this for a while. Notice your thoughts, and then let them go. [2 minutes]
"Gently open your eyes. How did that feel?"

Introduction to New Material: People in general tend to spend a lot of time obsessing over their thoughts and judgments. This makes it easy to get lost in fantasies of how the world *should* be. But again, these fantasies often lead to disappointment and suffering. As we practice our mindfulness skills in our daily lives, it is important to recognize and separate our judgments and fantasies from what's really happening in the moment.

One of the easiest ways to do this is to become mindful of our physical senses, or what we notice with our eyes, ears, nose, and senses of touch and taste. Often, people refer to this as *grounding* themselves. Grounding yourself in your physical sensations can stop you from obsessing over your judgments, and by doing so it will also help you become more mindful of what's happening in the present moment.

Guided Experiential Practice:

"To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths, close your eyes, and relax.

"Now, keeping your eyes closed, focus your attention on the weight of your body as it rests on the seat in which you're sitting. Notice the weight of your feet and legs resting on the ground. Notice the weight of your hands and arms resting. Notice the weight of your head resting on top of your neck. Mentally scan your body from head to toe and notice any sensations that you feel. Take your time. [Pause here for one minute.]

"Now notice any tension you might be feeling anywhere in your body, and imagine the tension melting away like wax in the hot sun. Again, take your time to scan your body for any tension, and keep taking slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute.]

"When you are finished scanning your body, move your focus to your thoughts and judgments. Just notice any thoughts or judgments that arise in your mind, and when they do, allow them to float away by whichever means you found successful earlier in the thought diffusion exercise. Allow the thoughts and judgments to leave you without getting stuck on them. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, long breaths. [Pause here for one minute.]

"Now redirect your attention to your sense of hearing. Notice any sounds that you can hear coming from outside the room, and note to yourself what they are. Now become aware of any sounds you hear coming from inside the room, and note to yourself what they are. Try to notice even small sounds, such as the ticking of the clock, the sound of the wind, or the beating of your heart. If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your sense of hearing. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing. [Pause here for one minute.]

"When you are finished noticing any sounds, once again redirect your focus to your thoughts and judgments. Notice any thoughts or judgments that arise in your mind, and when they do, allow them to float away by whichever means you found successful in the last exercise. Allow the thoughts and judgments to leave you without getting stuck on

them. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute.]

“Now, once again, redirect your attention. This time, put your focus on your sense of smell. Notice any smells that are in the room. If you don’t notice any smells, just become aware of the flow of air moving into your nostrils as you breathe in and out through your nose. Try your best to maintain your focus on your sense of smell. If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your nose. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute.]

“When you are finished noticing any smells, once again redirect your focus to your thoughts and judgments. Notice any thoughts or judgments that arise in your mind, and when they do, allow them to float away by whichever means you found successful in the last exercise. Allow the thoughts and judgments to leave you without getting stuck on them. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute.]

“Now redirect your attention to your sense of touch. Notice the sensation of whatever your hands are resting on. Or, keeping your eyes closed, reach out with one hand to touch an object that is within reach. Or, if there is no object within reach, touch the chair you’re sitting on or touch your leg. Notice what the object feels like. Notice if it’s smooth or rough. Notice if it’s pliable or rigid. Notice if it’s soft or solid. Notice what the sensations feel like on the skin of your fingertips. If your thoughts begin to distract you, simply return your focus to the object that you’re touching. [Pause here for one minute.]

“When you are finished noticing any touch sensations, once again redirect your focus to your thoughts and judgments. Notice any thoughts or judgments that arise in your mind, and when they do, allow them to float away by whichever means you found successful in the last exercise. Allow the thoughts and judgments to leave you without getting stuck on them. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute.]

“Now, slowly, open your eyes. Keep breathing slow, deep breaths. Take a few minutes to focus your visual attention on the room you’re sitting in. Notice the objects that are in the room. Notice where you are in the room. Take in all the visual information that you can. If your thoughts begin to distract you, simply return your focus to the room you’re looking at. Take a minute to do this. [Pause here for one minute.]

“When you have finished noticing any visual sensations, once again redirect your focus to your thoughts and judgments. But this time, keep your eyes open. Pick a few objects in the room to focus on. But in your mind, continue to notice any thoughts and judgments that arise, and when they do, allow them to float away. Allow the thoughts and judgments to leave you without getting stuck on them. If you need to close your eyes to do this, that’s okay. But open your eyes once the thoughts have floated away, and return your focus to the room you’re in. Continue to monitor your thoughts and judgments and continue to let them go without getting stuck on them. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, long breaths. [Pause here for one minute.]

“When you’ve finished, if you still have time left, continue to switch your focus between your thoughts and judgments and what you notice visually. Then, when your timer goes off, take three to five slow, long breaths and return your focus to the room” (McKay et al., 2007).

Independent Journaling Prompts:

- Has a judgment ever triggered an overwhelming emotion for you? Did that judgment turn out to be true?

World Discovery: The first step to changing a problem is to recognize when that problem occurs. For the next week, do your best to keep track of all the negative judgments and criticisms that you make. Then, when you find yourself in a similar situation, try to suspend judgment and look at the situation with an open mind.

Lesson 13: The Well – Asking the Three Most Important Questions

Learning Objectives:

- SWBAT implement a plan to build on a personal strength, meet a need, or address a challenge. (2.F)

Key Points:

- This lesson is intended to be an extension of the signature values lesson from Unit 1. In this lesson, students are asked to keep their signature values in mind while asking themselves the most important questions.
- Personal values are the beliefs, principles, or ideas that are important to you in your life. Values are things that you stand for, things that you believe in and are willing to support and fight for.
- The more aligned your life is with your personal values, the less vulnerable you are to emotional imbalance.

Opening Mindful Moment: This is an exercise on finding equanimity of the breath.

Sample Script: Breath Expansion

“Lying in savasana on the floor with an elongated spine, relax the body and begin to observe your breath. Place your left hand on your chest, and your right hand on your abdomen. On the inhale, first fill the chest and then fill the abdomen. On the exhale, first release the abdomen and then empty the lungs in the chest region. [10-15 breaths]

“Now notice the four components of the breath. There is the inhale, the pause before the exhale, the exhale, and the pause before the inhale. See if you can notice each part of your breath as you continue to breathe. [8-10 breaths]

“While still maintaining awareness of each part of your breath, let’s figure out if your inhales and exhales are equal in length. Begin counting on your next inhale. Count slowly and evenly. Stop once you reach the pause before your exhale, and start over at one as you breathe out. Try this a few times. Do you have a longer inhale or exhale, or are they even? [10-12 breaths]

“Now try to make your inhale and exhale equal in length. It helps to count while you breathe. On your next inhale, start at one and count up slowly until you reach the pause before your exhale. As you begin exhaling, start counting again at one and monitor your breath so that you spend the same amount of time on the exhale as you did on the inhale. [10-12 breaths]

“Let’s work on slowing and deepening our breath together. Empty all the air from your lungs. Inhale for 1, 2, 3, & 4, and exhale for 1, 2, 3, & 4. [repeat 5x]

“Slow down and deepen the breath as we inhale for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6, and exhale for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6. Continue to be mindful of each component of your breath. [repeat 5x]

“Let’s see if we can do 8 counts for some really slow and expansive breaths. Inhale for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8, and exhale for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8. [repeat 5x]

“Gently release control of your breathing. Allow your breaths to be effortless and relaxed. [5 breaths]

“When you’re ready, roll onto your right side, using your upper arm as a pillow. Take a few complete breaths, then gently push yourself up into a seated position with your legs crossed and your hands on your knees, keeping your eyes closed. Let’s sit silently like this for a while. Notice your thoughts, and then let them go. [2 minutes]

“Gently open your eyes.”

Introduction to New Material: Research has shown that the act of prioritizing values results in reduced stress, strengthened willpower, increased openness and decreased bias, and improved accuracy from reduced defensiveness (Cullen, 2015).

Guided Experiential Practice:

Sample Script: The Well

“It’s helpful to begin any session of guided visualization or meditation with three long, deep breaths. As you inhale, see if you can direct the breath all the way down into the belly and imagine filling up the whole torso with the in-breath, from the belly to the collarbones, just as you would fill a vessel with water. Then, as you exhale, expel all the air from the torso until you’re actually pulling the belly button back toward the spine. If possible, allow the out-breath to be even longer than the in-breath. After the third exhalation, let the breath return to its natural rhythm.

“Now, in your mind’s eye, imagine an old-fashioned water well, the kind that goes deep into the earth, to the source of cool, fresh water. Take a moment to close your eyes and get a clear picture of the scene. There might be a grassy knoll, and perhaps a stone arch over the well with a wooden bucket. Notice the temperature, the sky, and any other particulars that can place you in the scene. In front of you, on the ground, is a lovely stone. You bend down and pick it up and feel the texture, temperature, shape, and weight of the stone in your hand. Because this is the world of the mind, where anything is possible, imagine that there’s a question embedded in the heart of the stone: ‘Why am I reading this book? What am I hoping to get out of it? And most importantly, what is my heart yearning for?’

As you toss the stone into the well, listen for the answer that splashes up as the stone breaks the surface of the water. And then, as the stone slowly finds its way down into the well, see if any other answers bubble up to the surface. Slowed by the density of water, the stone might bounce off the sides of the well, sending up different answers as it moves deeper down. Eventually, it settles on the bottom of the well. Listen to see if one more answer floats up to the surface. (Cullen, 2015).

Sharing: Ask students how the guided meditation made them feel. Then read the following quotes out loud:

“Let me respectfully remind you: Life and death are of supreme importance. Time swiftly passes and opportunity is lost. Each of us must strive to awaken! This night your days will have diminished by one. Awaken, take heed; do not squander your life.” –Traditional Zen Gatha

“We cannot ask questions for which we do not already know the answer.” Hamid Ebadi

After each quote, stop and ask the students, “What do these quotes mean to you?” Allow students to share out loud, encouraging and accepting all responses.

Independent Journaling Prompts: Have students respond to the following prompts:

1. If anything were possible, what would you love to receive from the world? Let your imagination be as wide as the sky and allow the answer to be unedited. For now, there’s no right or wrong answer, no need for embarrassment or correction.
2. If you could grow in any way, how would you love to develop in this lifetime? What qualities would you love to nurture?
3. If you could offer anything to the world, what would you love to offer? How would you like to contribute and to be remembered? Again, allow this answer to be uncensored, in the privacy of your own heart and mind (Cullen, 2015).

World Discovery: Ask students to think of ways they could apply the qualities they want to nurture in themselves. Which situations would allow them to use those qualities?

Lesson 14: Generating Gratitude

Learning Objectives:

- SWBAT demonstrate consideration for others and a desire to positively contribute to their community. (3.E)

Key Points:

- Gratitude practice cultivates happiness and a positive mindset.
- Attention can be shifted away from destructive thought patterns and toward more positive thoughts.
- Compassion for self and others is built by focusing on gratitude.

Assessment: Assessment for this lesson will be based on participation in a group council discussion as well as showing respectful communication skills.

Connection to Achievement Goal: Because this lesson is done in a group setting, students are able to practice what this unit is all about – listening to others respectfully, understanding various perspectives, personally expressing their feelings, and interacting positively with a group.

Materials and Preparation: It is ideal to do the Opening Mindful Moment in an open space with students' yoga mats arranged in a big circle.

The Guided Experiential Practice activity can be done in chairs or with students seated on their yoga mats, but they should be arranged in a circle. This practice is ideally done as a council dialogue, which means a talking piece should be used (only the person holding the talking piece is allowed to speak).

Opening Mindful Moment: This is a practice in creating personal and intrapersonal rhythms.

Sample Script: Sun Breaths

“When you are ready, please find a comfortable seat. If you like, bring your hands to the tops of your thighs or toward your knees, palms down. When you inhale, lift your hands a few inches; when you exhale, bring your palms back to your legs. Inhale lift, exhale release. Feel free to take a moment or two to investigate breathing and moving – finding and honoring your own rhythm. Another option is to lift the arms out to the side and then all the way overhead on the inhale, and bring the palms together as you lower your hands through heart center on the exhale. Try to modify the speed of your movements so that you are moving the entire time you are breathing.

“For the next activity, you will need a partner sitting directly across from you. When you are ready, decide which one of you will set the pace. It may be interesting to take turns with this leadership role, but someone will need to set a pace. When you are ready, the leader can begin to talk through the process of inhaling and lifting hands, then exhaling and lowering them. In this version of the exercise, the focus is on synchronizing breath and movement with each other. Then, try using your bigger movements with your

arms like you practiced earlier on your own. Feel free to continue this for a minute or two, bringing the practice to an end when you are ready.” (Emerson & Hopper, 2011, 56)

Introduction to New Material: “What are you grateful for?” Tell students that this question invites a mindset that appreciates what the world has already offered us, rather than always looking at what isn’t enough. Instead of thinking about how you wish the world were different, you can learn to look at the world with appreciation for that which has already been given. Each breath has been gifted to us by the trees and plants. Our food is a gift from the plants and animals. When we look at the miraculous phenomenon of life, it can awaken gratitude, love, and compassion within us.

When we are compulsively thinking and striving to make our world different than what it is, we miss the big and the little beautiful things right in front of us. We can overlook the people in our lives that are the most caring, the community that supports us, and the environment that keeps us alive. Beginning with gratitude can help us see what is beautiful in our lives.

Guided Experiential Practice

Sample Script: Getting Grateful

“Sometimes we forget all the things in our lives that we can be grateful for. It’s like the rock at the top of a pyramid that isn’t aware of all the rocks below it is sitting on. We have so many ancestors who had to survive and fall in love and do so many things for you to come along. For you to be here, the sun has to keep rising every day to give life to the plants that we need to breathe and eat. There are so many people we don’t even think of who clean the bathrooms we use, drive the food to the store where we buy it, and who built the building we live in.

If we really take time to think about it, there are an endless number of things to be thankful for. When we focus on the things we are thankful for, it naturally makes us happier. When we are focusing on what we don’t have and what makes us upset, we feel lousy. Today we will practice our gratitude and we can explore how it shifts our state of mind.

Let your eyes close and get your mindful body on. Feel your breath coming in and out of your belly. Once you feel calm, picture the person in your life who makes you feel the happiest. Get a picture of that person in your head, and then imagine they are sitting right next to you. How does it feel to have them so close?

Now picture your favorite food and imagine it sitting right in front of you. Picture the colors and the smells and see what your body feels like. Keep thinking of your other favorite things and other people you’re happy to have in your life. Think of the things you are most grateful for. When you picture them, see how they make your body feel.

Now take a deep breath and let all the things you are grateful for go, and simply notice what your body feels like after gratefulness practice” (Rechtschaffen, 2014).

Sharing: Gratitude practice in a group is especially meaningful and transformative. A group can begin by saying what they are most grateful for today, this week, or in their lives. This positive attention can totally shift the environment of a classroom.

It can also be beneficial to help kids figure out what about themselves they are grateful for. They can name attributes about themselves that they like. It can also be wonderful for a class to do a spoken or written exercise where each student names what they are grateful for in every other student.

Here are a few quotes on gratitude that can be used to inspire discussion.

“We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorns have roses.” –Abraham Lincoln

“Once a little boy sent me a charming card with a little drawing on it. I loved it. I answer all my children’s letters – sometimes very hastily – but this one I lingered over. I sent him a card and I drew a picture of a Wild Thing on it. I wrote, “Dear Jim: I loved your card.” Then I got a letter back from his mother and she said, “Jim loved your card so much he ate it.” That to me was one of the highest compliments I’ve ever received. He didn’t care that it was an original Maurice Sendak drawing or anything. He saw it, he loved it, he ate it.” –Maurice Sendak

Independent Journaling Prompts:

1. Drawing: Draw a picture of yourself surrounded by all the things you are most grateful for.
2. Writing: Write a list of the things in your life that you are most grateful for.
3. What are some things, like the sun and the rain, that you need to live?
4. What aspects about yourself are you grateful for?

World Discovery: Once students have been introduced to a gratitude practice, they can begin their own gratitude journal. The journal might be something they keep indefinitely or for a limited time, like a week or a month. Encourage them to make an entry every day about what they are grateful for. Sometimes they may be grateful for so many things, and sometimes maybe they will just be able to name a few. Tell them that if they can make at least one entry every day about what they’re grateful for, they will see how it can brighten their whole day. At some point in the future, make time to discuss the things they’ve noticed about themselves and the world since starting to keep their journal.

A sample gratitude diary template is included in Appendix B.

Additional Considerations: Remember the diversity of your students. Some may not have parents, so you would not use parents as an example of what you would be grateful for. Find basic examples like being grateful for breath, water to drink, and for the sunshine.

Lesson 15: Creating Opposite Action – Doing the Opposite of Your Emotional Urges

Learning Objective:

- SWBAT analyze how one’s behavior may affect others. (4.A)

Key Points:

- Learning to be mindful of your emotions without judging them decreases the chance that they will grow in intensity and become even more overwhelming or painful.

Assessment: The assessment for this lesson will be the “Opposite-Action Planning Worksheet”.

Connection to Achievement Goal: Planning opposite-action strategies can give students an incredibly effective tool for emotion regulation that can be used whenever overwhelming emotion threatens to take over.

Opening Mindful Moment: This is an exercise on learning to be mindful of emotions without judgment. First, tell students to observe whatever current emotion they may be feeling, or if they can’t identify an emotion, tell them to visualize a recent scene where they experienced an emotional reaction.

Sample Script: Feeling Without Judging

“While breathing slowly and evenly, bring your attention to where you are feeling the emotion in your body. Is it a feeling in your chest or stomach, in your shoulders, or in your face or head? Are you feeling it in your arms or legs? Notice any physical sensations connected with the emotion. Now be aware of the strength of the feeling. Is it growing or diminishing? Is the emotion pleasant or painful? Try to name the emotion or describe some of its qualities.

“Now try to notice your thoughts. Do you have thoughts about the emotion? Does the emotion trigger judgments about others or about yourself? Just keep watching your emotion and keep observing your judgments.

“Now imagine that each judgment is one of the following:

1. *A leaf floating down a stream, around a bend, and out of sight*
2. *A computer pop-up ad that briefly flashes on the screen and disappears*
3. *One of a long string of boxcars passing in front of you at a railroad crossing*
4. *A cloud cutting across a windy sky*
5. *A message written on a billboard that you approach and pass at a high speed*
6. *One of a procession of trucks or cars approaching and passing you on a desert highway*

“Choose the image that works best for you. The key is to notice the judgment, place it on a billboard or leaf or boxcar, and let it go.

“Just keep observing your emotion. When a judgment about yourself or others begins to manifest, turn it into a visualization (leaf, cloud, billboard, and so on) and watch while it moves away and out of sight.

“Now it’s time to remind yourself of the right to feel whatever you feel. Emotions come and go, like waves in the sea. They rise up and then recede. Whatever you feel, no matter how strong or painful, is legitimate and necessary. Take a slow breath and accept the emotion as something that lives in you for a little while – and then passes.

“Notice your judgmental thoughts. Visualize them and then let them pass. Let your emotions be what they are, like waves in the sea that rise and fall. You ride your emotions for a little while, and then they leave. This is natural and normal. It’s what it means to be human.

“Finish the exercise with three minutes of mindful breathing, counting your exhales (1, 2, 3, 4 and then repeating 1, 2, 3, 4) and focusing on the experience of each moment as you breathe” (McKay et al., 2007, 160-161).

Guide students out of their exercise by telling them to gently open their eyes and reorient themselves to the room.

Introduction to New Material: There are good reasons for having emotions. Even when they are painful, whatever we feel is legitimate and valid. The larger problem is emotion-driven behavior, because acting on emotions often creates destructive outcomes that can turn into habits. For example, letting anger drive you to attack with words can disrupt your relationships. Letting fear drive you to avoid critical tasks and challenges can paralyze you at work.

A second problem with acting on emotion-driven impulses is that they actually intensify the original emotion. Instead of feeling relief, you may get even more caught up in the feeling. This is where *opposite action* comes in. Rather than fueling your emotion, opposite action helps to regulate and change it. Here are some examples of opposite action:

| Emotion | Emotion-Driven Behavior | Opposite Action |
|-------------|--|--|
| Anger | Attack, criticize, hurt, shout. | Validate, avoid or distract, use soft voice |
| Fear | Avoid, hunch shoulders. | Approach what you fear, do what you’ve been avoiding, stand tall. |
| Sadness | Shut down, avoid, be passive, slump, hang your head. | Be active, get involved, set goals, stand straight. |
| Guilt/Shame | Punish yourself, confess, avoid, shut down. | If unfounded guilt, continue doing whatever is triggering guilt; if guilt is justified, atone and make amends. |

Notice that opposite action changes body language, posture, facial expression, and actual behavior. Opposite action isn’t about denying or pretending an emotion isn’t happening, but rather it is about gaining control of your actions even when things are tough.

Acknowledge the emotion, but use the opposite behavior to reduce it or encourage a new emotion.

Guided Experiential Practice: Hand out the “Opposite-Action Planning Worksheet” and tell students that they’re going to identify some opposite-action strategies that can help them with emotion regulation. Tell students that we will complete the first emotion together so they get the hang of it.

There are six steps to creating opposite action:

1. Start by acknowledging what you feel. Describe the emotion in words under the “Emotion” column.
2. Ask yourself if there is a good reason to regulate or reduce the intensity of this emotion. Is it overpowering you? Does it drive you to do dangerous or destructive things?
3. Notice the specific body language and behavior that accompanies the emotion. What’s your facial expression? Your posture? What are you saying and how are you saying it? What, specifically, do you do in response to the emotion?
4. Identify the opposite action. How can you relax your face and body so it doesn’t scream “I’m angry” or “I’m scared”? How can you change your posture to convey confidence and vitality rather than depression? How can you move toward, not away from, what scares you? When you are angry, how can you acknowledge or ignore rather than attack? Make a plan for opposite action that includes a *specific* description of your new behavior.
5. Fully commit to opposite action, and set a time frame to work at it. How long will you maintain the opposite behavior? As you think about making a commitment, keep in mind why you want to regulate your emotions. What’s happened in the past when you gave in to emotion-driven behavior? Were there serious costs to you or to others?
6. Monitor your emotions. As you do the opposite action, notice how the original emotion may change or evolve. Opposite action literally sends a message to the brain that the old emotion is no longer appropriate – and it helps you shift to a less painful emotion.

Once students have gone through the first emotion with you prompting them, allow them to continue filling out the worksheet independently.

Independent Journaling Prompts: The journaling done today will be the completion of the “Opposite-Action Planning Worksheet” provided in Appendix B. In this activity, students should identify emotions they can expect to feel in the future and prepare a radically different response than they’ve had in the past. They can use the example you completed together as a guide.

World Discovery: Tell students to put their planning worksheet somewhere that they will be able to access easily should they need to recall what their opposite-action plan is for a specific emotion. Tell them that we will check back next time to see who remembered to do the opposite of their overwhelming emotion rather than fueling it. Encourage them to fill out the “Outcomes” column as well.

Lesson 16: Mindful Communication

Learning Objectives:

- SWBAT use positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others. (4.B)
- SWBAT analyze similarities and differences between one's own and others' feelings and perspectives. (3.A)

Key Points:

- Mindful communication cultivates empathic and attentive listening skills, builds communication and friendship skills, and helps develop the ability to speak from the heart with authenticity.

Assessment: This lesson's assessment will be based on students' participation in group and partner dialogue.

Connection to Achievement Goal: This lesson teaches students effective communication techniques to help them establish and maintain healthy relationships.

Materials and Preparation: This exercise works best in a circle. Use a talking piece to pass around so that each student can have a chance to share. If you break students into pairs, it is important that each pair is not too close to each other.

Introduction to New Material: Mindful listening is when we let go of our agendas and ideas to truly hear another person's perspective. We often have very firm impressions of the people we like and the people we don't like. Learning to see through our judgments can be hard work, but it allows us to be more friendly and positive. Being a good friend, teammate, or member of any group is determined by how well we can listen and be present with others. We can only really understand what someone is saying if our mind is clear from distractions and judgments.

When you fully pay attention to someone else during an interaction, you are able to ask clarifying questions that can help you correct misconceptions before they overwhelm you or cause trouble. Not paying attention, or focusing away from the moment between you and others, can cause you to miss vital cues about the other person's needs and reactions, inaccurately project your fears and feelings onto the other person, or blow up or run away when you are surprised by a negative response you did not see coming. Mindful attention and communication helps you read important signals about the state of the relationship (McKay et al., 2007).

The other part of mindful communication is mindful speaking, or speaking authentically. Instead of saying what we think others want to hear, we can learn to speak our inner truth. This means we need to be aware of what is going on inside, and then we need to be brave enough to share this with others. When you can really speak your truth and truly listen to others who are doing the same, true friendship and connection can occur.

Guided Experiential Practice

Sample Script: Present Moment Conversation

"In our lesson today, we will learn to communicate from the present moment instead of simply sharing past experiences or ideas about the future. Making a present moment statement means simply stating what you experience right now in your body. You can say what sensations you feel in your body, what you see, hear, smell, or taste. You can also share your emotions, like if you are nervous, happy, or excited.

"An example would be, "In the present moment I am aware of the sound of cars going by." Or, "In the present moment I am aware of feeling nervous." You will say this short statement and remember not to go into details about it. After you say you hear the cars going by you wouldn't say, "and that reminds me of something my sister said to me while we were driving in the car this morning." You are simply stating the present moment experience. We are learning to share and listen in the present moment about what is really going on in our bodies and hearts."

"Let's begin by getting our mindful bodies on and looking inside to see all the experiences happening in our bodies.

"For one minute, open up your listening ears to every sound you hear, near or far. Now, for one minute, feel all the sensations throughout your whole body. Now, for another minute, check in to see what emotions you are experiencing in your body.

"We can sit for one more minute and open our awareness as big as the sky. You can notice sensations, emotions, sounds, or whatever is happening in the present moment. If you notice thoughts, you can watch them float by like clouds in the sky.

"Now we are going to keep our eyes closed and continue to practice our mindfulness, and as we do this we are going to learn how to speak mindfully. We will go around in a circle. When it is your turn you can look inside and say what you are experiencing in this moment. Start your sentence with "In the present moment I am aware of..."

"We can go around in a circle a few times and everyone can share what they are experiencing in the present moment. Remember to keep your eyes closed and focus inside. Don't try to come up with what you are going to say before your turn. See if you can simply listen when you are not speaking, and when it is your turn say whatever is true in the moment.

"Now, shift your chairs so you are back-to-back with a partner. Sit in a comfortable position with your back straight and your body relaxed. Let your eyes close and focus inside. Take a slow, deep breath and allow the breath to be just as it is. When you are ready, open your eyes softly but keep your body mindful. One student at a time will share a few words about his or her mindful experience with the statement, "In the present moment I am aware of..." After a mindful statement has been made, each student can take a mindful breath and then the other student shares a mindful statement.

"Remember not to go into stories or explanations. Stay in the present.

"If you feel nervous or uncomfortable, you can always share that, saying, "In the present moment I am aware of feeling nervous." (Rechtschaffen, 2014).

Have students close their eyes and take some anchor breaths, thank each other, and orient themselves back to the room.

Sharing: Ask students what it would be like if we always talked like this to each other. This is also a great opportunity to talk about insecurity. Ask students to share if they ever feel nervous or uncomfortable when they are talking with friends or family, or if they ever feel judged or like they have to put on an act. You can also share these quotes:

“Be yourself, everyone else is taken.” –Oscar Wilde

“Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.” –Martin Luther King Jr.

“You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.” –Indira Gandhi

Independent Journaling Prompts:

- Drawing: Draw a picture of the whole class sharing mindful words.
- Writing: How was that different than the usual way you talk with people?
- What did you notice in yourself as you were talking and listening?
- What would the world be like if this was the way everyone talked to each other?

World Discovery: “Notice the way you usually talk to people and see if you can bring in more present moment statements. See if you can learn to be more authentic and tell people what is really going on inside. You can also work on your mindful listening skills – when someone is talking to you, see if you can really listen instead of just waiting for your turn to talk. See if you can suspend judgment about that person. After all, most of our judgments are based on experiences of learning from the past, not what we are experiencing right now” (Rechtschaffen, 2014, 243).

Lesson 17: Problem Solving Using Behavior Analysis

Learning Objectives:

- SWBAT demonstrate the ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways. (4.D)

Key Points:

- Problem solving begins with something called behavior analysis. Basically, this amounts to tracing the sequence of events that led up to a problematic emotion.

Connection to Achievement Goal: Sometimes emotion regulation has to start *before* the overwhelming feelings begin. Problem solving focuses on the triggering event and finds new, more effective ways to respond.

Opening Mindful Moment: This exercise is a seated twist posture.

Sample Script: Twisting Your Spine

*“If you like, let’s begin in the Seated Mountain posture with your legs bent in front of you and your palms reaching toward the floor next to your hips. Notice your feet on the ground. Notice your tall spine. Notice some broadening and expansiveness across your chest. When you are ready, inhale deeply, and as you exhale begin to slowly twist to the left. If you like, you can bring your left hand to your left hip and your right hand across your left thigh. Turning very gently toward your left, see if you can maintain your feet on the ground, a tall spine, and a broadening across your chest. Give yourself a moment to breathe here. Notice that you do not have to turn very far. Maybe a slight turn works best. Make sure that you can breathe comfortably and that there is no pain. If you feel any pain – any tension or discomfort whatsoever – please be willing to back down. You could experiment with coming out of the twist totally (you always have that control) or just backing down to the point where you can breathe comfortably. Feel free to experiment but, perhaps, making a commitment to feel comfortable in the posture. After a few breaths with the twist to your left, feel free to unwind through the middle and experiment with the other side in the same way. **ADD SOMETHING:** When you are turning to one side, you can experiment with turning your chin toward that shoulder and even glancing toward the wall behind you – drawing the twist through your eyes. When you are ready, gently return back to the middle and to your Seated Mountain posture. Slowly open your eyes if they are closed.”* (Emerson & Hopper, 2011, 102.)

Easy Seated Twist



Source: https://598d5fcf392acad97538-395e64798090ee0a3a571e8c148d44f2.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/8588237_8-easy-yoga-poses-to-relieve-sciatica-pain_ta014d08c.jpg

Introduction to New Material: The point of this lesson is that you *can* change or soften overwhelming emotions by changing what you do *before* the emotion sweeps you away. Together, we're going to analyze our behavior to find out what our triggers are. In other words, we want to discover the things that make us snap. Look at this example by a student named Sam:

Sam's Behavior Analysis Worksheet

- Problematic emotion: *Rage at mother*
- Precipitating event
 - External event: *Mom's visit. She looks disgusted when she sees my apartment.*
 - Thoughts: *My apartment is full of dirty dishes and looks run-down. My place is a dump.*
- Secondary events
 - Emotion: *Sadness*
Thought: *I hate this place.*
 - Emotion: *Shame*
Thoughts: *Why do I spend my life in dumps like this? Why can't I do better than this? I know why – because I'm a loser who can't make any money.*
 - Behavior: *Accused my mom of not helping when I needed it and of not caring about my problems, and when she disagreed, I blew up.*

Notice that the external event – mom's visit – is only one step in a series. And most of the steps leading to the rage are internal – both thoughts and other painful feelings. If Sam is going to regulate his anger, he needs to identify which steps in the triggering process he wants to change and then use problem solving to plan a different response.

Guided Experiential Practice: Hand out the "Behavior Analysis Worksheet" (Appendix B) and tell students to identify precipitating or secondary events they want to change. Then, they will independently complete the ABC Problem Solving Technique.

Independent Journaling Prompts: Independently, allow students to reflect on the following questions by answering them in their journals:

- A. Alternatives.** Brainstorm alternative responses. How could you change precipitating or secondary thoughts or behaviors?
- B. Best ideas.** Evaluate your list and choose one or two of your best ideas to implement.
- C. Commitment to implementation.** Identify the time and place you'll try your new responses. Write out the new thoughts or behavior you'll use.

World Discovery: Encourage students to try their alternative responses and note the outcomes.

APPENDIX B

Supplementary Materials

[illegible]

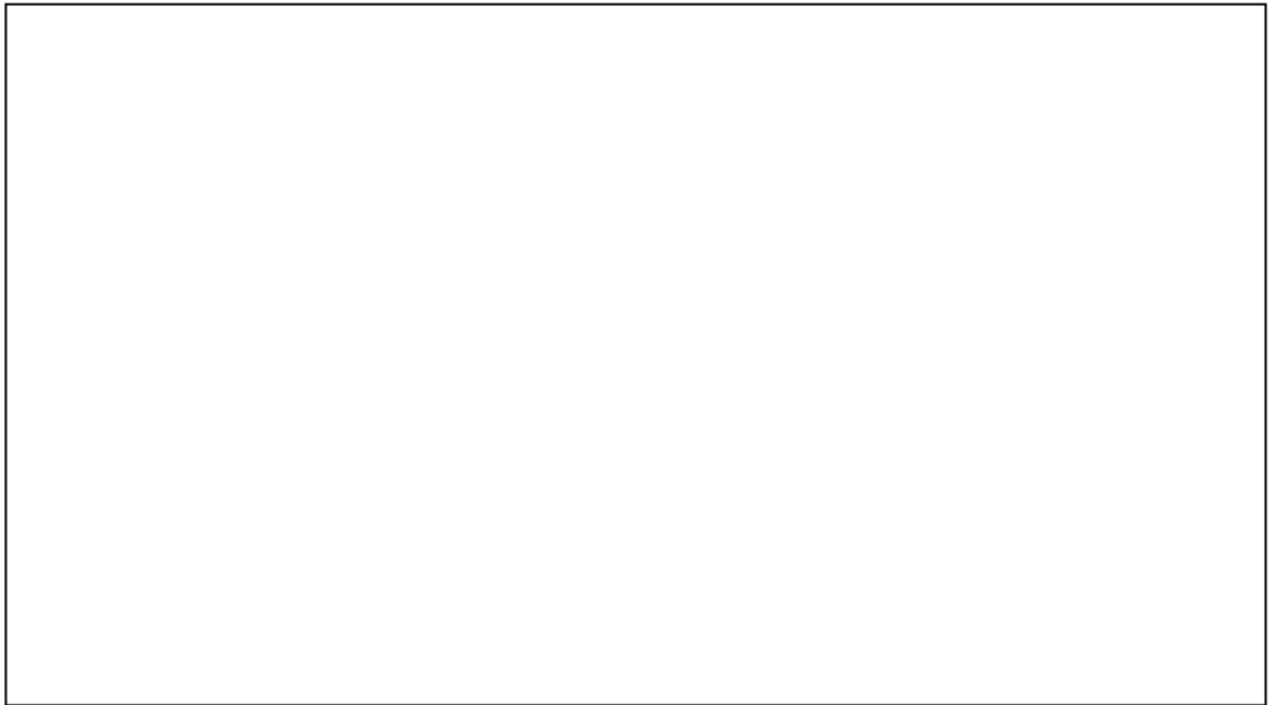
Describe Your Emotion – For use with Lesson 6, Recognizing and Describing Emotions

Source: <http://mbsrworkbook.com/resources/>

Describe Your Emotion

Name the emotion: _____

Draw a picture of your emotion



1. Describe a related action: _____

2. Describe a related sound: _____

3. Describe the intensity of the emotion: _____

4. Describe the quality of the emotion: _____

5. Describe thoughts related to the emotion: _____

Gratitude Diary – For use with Lesson 14, Generating Gratitude.

Source: <http://mbsrworkbook.com/resources/>

Gratitude Diary

| | |
|-------|----------------------------|
| Day 1 | 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. |
| Day 2 | 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. |
| Day 3 | 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. |
| Day 4 | 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. |
| Day 5 | 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. |
| Day 6 | 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. |
| Day 7 | 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. |

Opposite-Action Planning Worksheet – For use with Lesson 15, Creating Opposite Action.

Source: <http://mbsrworkbook.com/resources/>

| Opposite-Action Planning Worksheet | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|
| Emotion | Emotion-Driven Behavior | Opposite Action | Time Period | Outcomes |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Behavior Analysis Worksheet – For Use with Lesson 17, Problem Solving Using Behavior Analysis.Source: <http://mbsrworkbook.com/resources/>**Behavior Analysis Worksheet**

- Problematic emotion: _____
- Precipitating event (what happened before the emotion)
 - External event: Did something happen over which you have no control (losing a job, getting sick, disturbing news, and so on)? _____
 - Thoughts: What thoughts, prior to the emotion, might have triggered or intensified your reaction? _____
 - Emotion: Was there a prior and different emotion that triggered your reaction? _____
 - Behavior: Was something you or someone else did a trigger for your reaction? _____
- Secondary events: Identify what happened immediately after the precipitating event (but before the problematic emotion). Break it down into a series of steps (a, b, c).
 - Thoughts: _____
Emotion: _____
Behavior: _____
 - Thoughts: _____
Emotions: _____
Behavior: _____
 - Thoughts: _____
Emotions: _____
Behavior: _____

Alternatives:**Best Ideas:****Commitment to Implementation:**

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